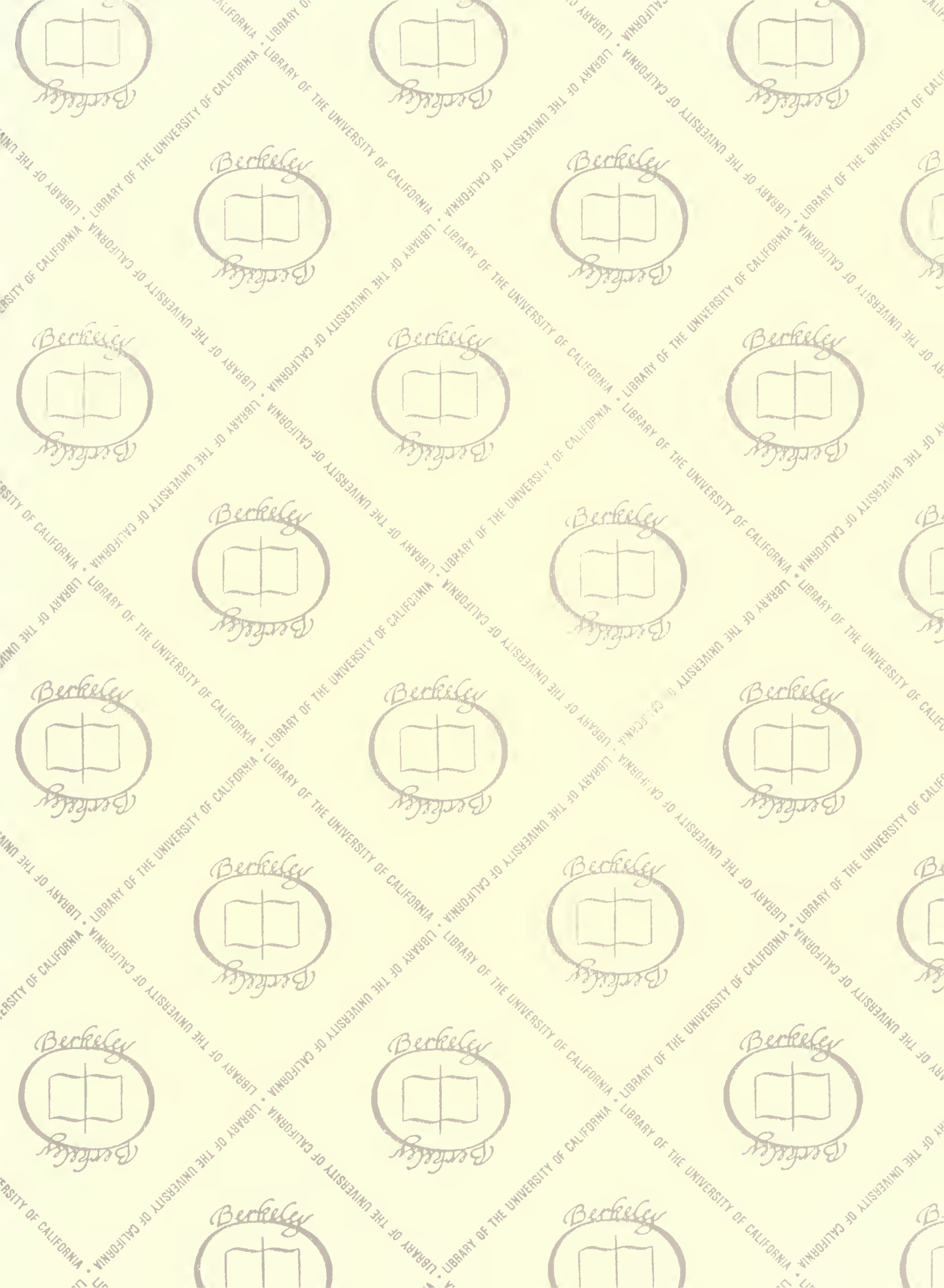


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Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

POLITICAL ADVOCACY AND LOYALTY

Bertram Coffey	Reflections on George Miller, Jr., Governors Pat and Jerry Brown, and the Democratic Party
Coleman Blease	A Lobbyist Views the Knight-Brown Era
Samuel Yorty	Samuel Yorty: A Challenge to the Democrats
Lucretia Engle	Clair Engle as Campaigner and Statesman
Pierre Salinger	A Journalist as Democratic Campaigner and U.S. Senator

Interviews Conducted by
Amelia R. Fry, Gabrielle Morris,
James Rowland, Julie Shearer
1977-1979

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PREFACE

Covering the years 1953 to 1966, the Goodwin Knight-Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, Sr., Oral History Series is the second phase of the Governmental History Documentation Project begun by the Regional Oral History Office in 1969. That year inaugurated the Earl Warren Era Oral History Project, which produced interviews with Earl Warren and other persons prominent in politics, criminal justice, government administration, and legislation during Warren's California era, 1925 to 1953.

The Knight-Brown series of interviews carries forward the earlier inquiry into the general topics of: the nature of the governor's office, its relationships with the legislature and with its own executive departments, biographical data about Governors Knight and Brown and other leaders of the period, and methods of coping with the rapid social and economic changes of the state. Key issues documented for 1953-1966 were: the rise and decline of the Democratic party, the impact of the California Water Plan, the upheaval of the Vietnam War escalation, the capital punishment controversy, election law changes, new political techniques forced by television and increased activism, reorganization of the executive branch, the growth of federal programs in California, and the rising awareness of minority groups. From a wider view across the twentieth century, the Knight-Brown period marks the final era of California's Progressive period, which was ushered in by Governor Hiram Johnson in 1910 and which provided for both parties the determining outlines of government organization and political strategy until 1966.

The Warren Era political files, which interviewers had developed cooperatively to provide a systematic background for questions, were updated by the staff to the year 1966 with only a handful of new topics added to the original ninety-one. An effort was made to record in greater detail those more significant events and trends by selecting key participants who represent diverse points of view. Most were queried on a limited number of topics with which they were personally connected; a few narrators who possessed unusual breadth of experience were asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. Although the time frame of the series ends at the November 1966 election, when possible the interviews trace events on through that date in order to provide a logical baseline for continuing study of succeeding administrations. Similarly, some narrators whose experience includes the Warren years were questioned on that earlier era as well as the Knight-Brown period.

The present series has been financed by grants from the California State Legislature through the California Heritage Preservation Commission and the office of the Secretary of State, and by some individual donations. Portions of several memoirs were funded partly by the California Women in Politics Project under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including a matching grant from the Rockefeller Foundation; the two projects were produced concurrently in this office, a joint effort made feasible by overlap of narrators, topics, and staff expertise.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative direction of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library, and Willa Baum, head of the Office.

Amelia R. Fry, Project Director
Gabrielle Morris, Project Coordinator

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GOODWIN KNIGHT-EDMUND BROWN, .SR. ERA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
(California, 1953-1966)

Interviews Completed and In Process, March 1982

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 Guggenheim, Charles, *The Use of Film in Political Campaigning.*
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 Elkington, Norman, *From Adversary to Appointee: Fifty Years of Friendship with Pat Brown.*
 Nelson, Helen, *The First Consumer Counsel in California.*

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Allen, Bruce F., *California Oil and Water, and the Politics of Reform, 1953-1960*.

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Allen, Don A., *A Los Angeles Assemblyman Recalls the Reapportionment Struggle*.

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Levit, Bert W., *State Finance and Innovations in Government Organization, 1944-1959*.

Tieburg, Albert B., *California State Department of Employment, 1945-1966*.

Wedemeyer, John, *California State Department of Social Welfare, 1959-1966*.

Lowry, James, *California State Department of Mental Hygiene, 1960s*.

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 Yorty, Samuel, *Samuel Yorty: A Challenge to the Democrats.*
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 Warne, William E., *Administration of the Department of Water Resources, 1961-1966.*
 Bonderson, Paul R., *Executive Officer, Regional and State Water Pollution and Water Quality Control Boards, 1950-1966.*

INTRODUCTION

Political Advocacy and Loyalty is part of a larger collection of oral histories focussing on the period when Goodwin J. Knight and Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, Sr., were governors of California, 1953-1966, which are contained in the Governmental History Documentation Project of the Regional Oral History Office. The topics of political advocacy and political loyalty take many forms as these interviewees reveal their own careers. Bertram Coffey discusses the complexities of Pat Brown's campaigns and the establishment of the California Democratic Council, and examines his own political and personal loyalty to Geroge Miller, Jr. The reader can almost hear Miller's "gravel-voice toughness" as Coffey relates it in Miller's impressive opposition to the Burns-Porter Act, BART, and other key issues during his tenure as a state senator, 1949-1968. In Coleman Blease's oral history are substantive comments on his daily activities as advocate for the Friends Committee on Legislation in Sacramento, adding prescriptions for success at the job of lobbying. Blease even broaches his own theory of what political advocacy is and can accomplish. Taking a much different tack, Samuel Yorty, past mayor of Los Angeles and United States congressman, briefly chronologues a career of campaigning and loyalty to opposing political parties and persons. In a distinctive interview, Lucretia Engle describes the political career of her husband, Clair Engle, whose special interest was water legislation, who was a United States Senator from California between 1956 and 1964, when he died in office. Most candidly she outlines the tensions that surrounded his deepening illness and the political negotiating that went on around Engle over his Senate seat in that election year. Finally, Pierre Salinger discusses his own political advocacy and personal loyalty for a wide variety of candidates, among them, tragically, John F. and Robert F. Kennedy. Salinger also notes his own weighing of Governor Pat Brown's appointment of him to Clair Engle's seat in the U.S. Senate upon Engle's death in August 1964, as well as comments on his own defeat in the general campaign for that position the following November.

This set of interviews flesh out with great human reminiscence a portion of the intriguing activities that were the reality of Democratic party politics when Pat Brown was governor of California.

Sarah Sharp
Interviewer/Editor

26 May 1982
Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Bertram Coffey

REFLECTIONS ON GEORGE MILLER, JR.,
GOVERNORS PAT AND JERRY BROWN,
AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

An Interview Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris
in 1978



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INTERVIEW HISTORY -- Bertram Coffey

In one compact, earnest, vigorous person, Bert Coffey combines the political astuteness of a party chairman, the personal loyalty of a legislator's confidant, and the practical competence of a campaign professional. All three of these traits are vividly portrayed in this narrative of over three decades during which Coffey has worked at the heart of California Democratic affairs. During much of this time, his closest ties were with George Miller, Jr., the Contra Costa County senator who was a legendary figure in Sacramento from 1949 until his untimely death in 1968. Most recently, Coffey served as chairman of the state central committee (1977-1979).

At first reluctant to be interviewed for a study of Pat Brown's administration because he felt he hadn't been particularly close to the governor, Coffey readily agreed to participate when assured that the project also wished to preserve firsthand accounts of Senator Miller in action. He even went so far as to comment briefly on his own painful experience of being "HUACed" for youthful contacts with the Communist party and the resulting shutdown of his promising public relations business.

The interview was conducted in Coffey's informal bachelor apartment in Richmond, California, on July 31, 1978. He was coping with chronic back problems and appeared to welcome the distraction of recalling former political battles. What emerges is a vivid account of George Miller's vitality and magnetism and forceful support of the liberal principles the two men shared. Coffey, the union organizer, and Miller, the management labor relations man, turned Contra Costa around from a Republican stronghold to a Democratic district; later they encouraged the organization and growth of the California Democratic Council, a major factor in party victories for a decade; and when Miller was state party chairman in 1954, Coffey was his aide in the central committee office.

Coffey touches on Miller's sturdy defense of northern California water supplies, the ticklish question of representing a district in which the Standard Oil Company is the largest constituent, and the sense of propriety and protocol that made Miller a strong force in the legislature while not a threat to the long dominance of Senate pro tem Hugh Burns. In 1950 and 1954, Coffey took on the job of rounding up labor support statewide for Pat Brown's campaigns for attorney general, with Miller's approval. "It was interesting; if I couldn't get in to see someone using Pat's name, I'd use George's." And, gregarious though the governor is, "Pat used to say to me. . . 'I wish I had a friend like you are to George.'"

The interview goes on to describe reorganizations of the state Democratic party under Miller and later under Coffey. Throughout these years, Coffey's concern has been for political responsiveness to "porkchop issues" such as jobs and prices and a fair tax system. Miller, he comments, "predicted there would be this complaint about taxes and said something should be done then."

Because Coffey was deeply involved in the details of 1980 campaigns, he had little time to review the edited transcript, which he was sent in January 1979. On March 31, 1980, he met the interviewer for breakfast at the Marriott Inn off Highway 80 and went over questions arising from the transcript. Each question produced a spate of fresh recollection. These additional comments are included in brackets at the relevant points in the text.

Gabrielle Morris
Interviewer/Editor

28 January 1981
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

Governmental History Documentation Project Interviewee

Your full name Bertram Coffey

Date of birth June 18, 1916

Father's full name Irving J Coffey

Father's place of birth Polish - Russian border

Mother's full name Fay Levine Coffey

Mother's place of birth Brooklyn, N.Y.

Where did you grow up?

Education

Early employment

Positions held in state government

Employment after leaving state government



I DEMOCRATIC PARTY MANAGEMENT

[Date of Interview: July 31, 1978]##

Travels and Advice for Pat Brown: 1950, 1954

- Coffey: What I was saying was that I was busy last year, had a heavy amount of flu on and off for six or seven months, and in between making meetings. So I really didn't have a desire to talk about it. Then when you talk about Pat--I'm not heavily involved in the legislative process. What am I going to say about the Governor? How valuable could I be to you? That's why I was very reluctant.
- Morris: Getting into your press clippings, sir, you've been involved in a number of important campaigns for a number of years, particularly in the years when Pat was getting started in state government.
- Coffey: Nineteen fifty, that was the statewide campaign when he ran for attorney general. It was a bad year for Democrats. We still had crossfiling. After the primary, whenever the primary ended in those days--I don't know whether we had one in August or June; it might have been June--he said, "Bert, I've got a bunch of Republicans working for me. Nobody even knows the party and labor. If you're not doing anything, why don't you just report to me." [It's hard to remember who the Republicans were after all this time. They were people Pat had known in earlier days and kept in touch with, some of them from the time he was a Republican. BC 3/31/80]

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 65.

Coffey: So we raised some money just so I could travel. This was, you know, a modest amount of money. It was raised by some lawyers. That was to pay for my travel really and some expenses. That's all I did was report to Pat. I would go up and down the state to set up meetings to get him on labor slates.

He had a lot of problems with labor because [Fred N.] Howser was very close to labor, the Republican incumbent. There were allegations that he was close to labor because during the war he permitted some union halls to have slot machines.

Morris: Yes, that was a very tricky issue at one point.

Coffey: Gambling, yes. So, some of the old-timers didn't want to oppose Howser, who later ran into some trouble, and were reluctant to support Pat. It was I who had to go down and speak to them and talk about what a great Democrat Pat was and he was going to win.

"By God, we want you there." [I would tell them] I was representing some people in the state senate and the party and I'd give them all kinds of stories. And we got onto slate cards. Pat was the only Democrat who won that year. It was very, very interesting.

He had spent a lot of his time seizing the middle of the road and not being portrayed as a conservative or radical but kind of very early on being a moderate. Also, there's a tradition in the state which has become fairly evident--it may change this time--that the attorney general would come out of prosecutorial experience. Earl Warren, you know, came out of Alameda County. He was a DA. Pat was a DA in San Francisco. So, in the strange politics of the state then, you didn't identify your party. It was cross-filing. Pat survived the primary and so did Jimmy Roosevelt--George Miller, Jr., my dear friend, ran for lieutenant governor, but nobody knew him. George had \$25,000 for a statewide campaign.

Morris: For a statewide campaign?

Coffey: Oh, yes.

Jimmy was supposed to raise \$50,000 back east and on that representation wanted him to run, because Jimmy had asked George Miller, Jr. to run. [Roosevelt was supposed to raise another \$25,000, but he never did. He said friends back east let him down. Some bad feelings developed between us, but it's all right now. I see him every now and then. George was going to pull out when that happened, but he decided, "What the heck," and went on; he was young then. BC 3/31/80]

Coffey: George was a thirty-one or thirty-two-year-old state senator from the north, attractive, dynamic, Catholic--all the opposite of Jimmy--native, grown up here, went to St. Mary's, good voting record, knew the district. So, he was asked to run. But Jimmy called and let us down, told us both that he couldn't raise the money.

But we continued the race anyway, just for exercise really. We went up and down the state. Pat, of course, was doing his own thing. Helen Douglas was doing her own thing.

Morris: She was having trouble that year.

Coffey: Yes, she later, along with Jimmy, was dumped.

Morris: Yes.

Coffey: That was the Nixon "Pink Lady," pink sheets, accusations of voting like [Vito] Marcantonio. You know, the Republicans do that all the time. They take a voting record of somebody that's targeted as--most recently would be, for example, Bella Abzug--say, So-and-so votes like Bella Abzug, and historic records. The idea was to make her look like a Commie sympathizer. They were fairly successful in doing that to her.

I remember I got punched in the lip and I had two stitches because some postmaster in this town made some terrible comment about Helen after we endorsed her at a central committee meeting. It was at the local hotel at the time. It was a hotel; now it's boarded up. I just said, "Well, gee, that's a lie." I wasn't looking and the guy, who had been a boxer as a young man, hit me. I picked up my hand--of course, he was old enough then where I could have hurt him because I was about twenty-seven. Nobody was going to attack my friend, Helen Gahagan Douglas.

Then Helen saw me a couple weeks later. They all heard about, in political circles, how Bert defended Helen, you know. She came up and gave me a kiss, and so a couple of guys came up and said, "Hey, how about me?"

Morris: "How about me?" [laughter]

Coffey: It was that kind of a split in the party. But Pat was able to ride above all that as a DA and win as attorney general.

We got onto slate cards. In other words, I developed the Roosevelt-Douglas-Pat Brown slate cards, labor endorsements, etc., so that I was kind of an adjunct to him in the campaign.

Coffey: [It was not a joint campaign. Pat was running an independent campaign. Harry Lerner, who was working for Pat, perceived correctly that Pat would win and the others would lose. I was asked by Pat to come along to bridge relations with the other candidates. George had lost the primary by then, but it was okay with him. So I went to see various people and encouraged them not to be angry with Pat and to put him on their slate; this would be local groups, like county central labor councils. It helped Pat to get some identification, particularly in the south, and it turned out to be something they could point to that they'd done, since he was the only one who won.

[See, Pat's strategy was that the AG's office is above politics, he was running an independent campaign--but privately he'd complain that he didn't have any Democratic votes. So the answer was to get Coffey to help. It was interesting; if I couldn't get in to see someone using Pat's name, I'd use George's. A lot of the labor people were Catholic; and this was something I didn't realize at the time, but it helped that George was Catholic too. It was not arduous. You'd pick your places where he was having trouble and take Pat around to talk to people and urge that they put him on their slate card.

[Labor was not that solid Democratic. In the building trades, there were craft unions that were not comfortable with the social programs of the New Deal. It was the industrial unions of the CIO that saw politics as a year-round operation. It was their leadership that was saying, "Politics is pork chops"; it determines how you live and what interest rates will be--and the CIO became the driving force in campaigns for these kinds of things. But the rank and file included many anti-Democratic votes.

[In the period we're talking about, coming out of World War II, many unions in the war industries came out of the CIO, but others like in shipbuilding in Richmond came out of the craft unions. And some of the business agents had control of some slot machines and an understanding about them with the attorney general. You can assume there was some protection going on, some sheriffs saying, "Boys will be boys; it's wartime," some bars and cardroom owners making a little extra money because they didn't make enough from the bar; but as to any connection with Bones Remmer, people like that, I don't know.

[There was some resentment of Pat, feeling that he was not pro-labor. You know, until Reagan, even though the Republican tradition was conservative, they would give labor a vote on many things it wanted. Goodie Knight was of that tradition. Now you need to pay attention to CoLab, business and labor in the building trades

Coffey: working together to encourage development. Their concern is pretty clearly with political control of zoning and planning decisions, not social programs. They're cutting back now, but after this "creative financing" period is over, I wouldn't be surprised if Contra Costa County was the next Orange County. In spite of all the fuss that stopped Dow from building, labor would sit down with Dow because it would mean jobs for their people.

[A lot of the building trades don't like Jack Knox for his work in regional planning, environmental quality control. Working on legislation, you get close to lots of people and I know Knox never raised much money; nor did Miller. Yes, I worked for Jack Knox, when he was doing the revision of the corporations law. He's somebody who has good recall on a lot of these things if you want to talk to him for your project. But do it soon, before he retires. He and his wife talked it over and made the decision to quit at the end of this term. He's got one or two children in private colleges and he needs to consider his economic position, but I don't know how he'll survive emotionally. Try to talk to him during the summer recess, before he gets involved in this San Francisco law firm he's joining. BC 3/31/80]

But we never got too close. Pat used to say to me, look at me kind of forlornly, and say, "I wish I had a friend like you are to George," meaning George Miller, because we were very close. I said, "Well, that's life. People make friends and people have loyalties. I'm sure you have many."

There was always something about Pat, that boyish charm, ebullient, very practical, very much in tune with his own environment, not an intellectual. I don't know if he ever was a great lawyer or not. As a matter of fact, I imagine he just practiced for a few years and went into the DA's office. Polite, but yet, very typically, a changing stream of associations and friends. He worked very hard at developing in all the cities an alliance with various lawyers, many of whom became judges.

Morris: Did he appoint many of them?

Coffey: Later on, oh yes. Yes, yes.

Morris: So even in his attorney general campaign he was kind of building his own organization?

Coffey: Oh, yes, as attorney general. For example, he called me once. That was about three years after he was elected attorney general. He was calling up people to visit with him and explore the possibility of running for governor. That was--gosh, history would have to tell us whether it was '56 or not, or '55, around that period.

Morris: Or maybe '53?

Coffey: When did he first run for governor?

Morris: He didn't run till '58.

Coffey: Yes, that's '53. I'll be very brief about what I said. We talked a while, and I said, "Pat, nobody beats Goodie Knight at this time. It's a bad, bad time for us."

Sam Rayburn had asked young George Miller to think of running because he was very attractive and people who had met him liked him and heard about him. [Rayburn got to know George in Chicago, but he was not really in contact with Rayburn very much after that. George had little interest in Washington. He was a Sacramento man; he never wanted to go to Washington. Part of it was the economics of it. He never had much money and wasn't a hustler; he was one for the family. BC 3/31/80]

George said to me, "What do you think?" I said, "Go to Mexico and vacation. This is not the year to run."

I rarely say that because I believe we've got to take our shot at the position, and we've got to go out and articulate a position, a cause, and to be there win or lose, although it's much nicer to win. But at that time I guess out of personal deep loyalties I said to Pat, "No, don't run." I said to George, "Don't run," and George backed Richard Graves to run.

Morris: Right. That's what I wanted to ask you about.

Coffey: I had no relationship whatsoever with Richard Graves. I didn't lift a finger to do anything except to help Democrats in the state, you know, in terms of my community. But I had no particular affection for Richard Graves. George thought he was a very bright guy, and League of California Cities, knows the state, wants to do it; he'd be a hell of a campaigner. George sold it at the CDC convention.

It was the first time George and I really parted. But it was the kind of a parting that I just didn't do anything except vote. I just had no feeling for a man who had just converted from the Republican party to be a Democrat to run that year. I thought it was a lost cause. I can't say that they put him up as a show. I could say that some people believe that. It wasn't so. It was just that guys like Pat Brown and George and other--the word today is viable candidates--were advised that this was not a year for them to run for governor. To make the race they got Richard.

Morris: Because the party has to put up a candidate?

Coffey: Oh, of course. Of course. A party, as much as we had one in this state, put one up. Don't forget these were the days before cross-filing [was abolished].

California Democratic Council Leaders and Controversies in the mid-1950s

Coffey: See, it was George Miller, Jr. that opened the doors to the CDC, to establishing the CDC. The books are clear on that. I participated in all the meetings that led to the establishment of CDC. I brought in all the folks for George, whether it be Libby Gatov--it was Smith then--Pierre Salinger, Roger Kent. I kind of was the--[laughter] I hate the language I'm using; I guess I'm tired today--I was the fellow that kept the liaison with them going. George was a state senator, the state chairman. I would just bring these people together.

Morris: The CDC was set up as an official organization, wasn't it?

Coffey: The CDC was set up by us to be an unofficial organization that would generate interest in the party, bring people into--. There was no place for people to go.

There was little machinery. Bill Malone ran the patronage for the Democratic administrations and kept a very tight little organization in San Francisco, raised money, had influence over the IRS, the typical, old-fashioned relationships to certain areas of government, ran the party, was the boss, is still alive incidentally, very healthy but has done nothing.

Typically, of who I just spoke to, Richard Richards. They get out of office and do nothing politically. I've never seen any of Bill Malone's money. He's given me some advice when he has visited with me in the city, but I've seen no money, no help from any of them, any of them. They ran their own little thing, and they all prospered by it, legally. But they had no deep ideological interest, and if you stretch it a little many of them really talk and think like Republicans have in the last ten or twelve years.

So that was that. However, we called a meeting at Asilomar, California. We told people who had a gripe to come down, and we had a great weekend. We had some great people. We put together a program. It got coverage all over the country. We, from that, went to Stockton where--for some reason we picked Stockton. I guess it was one of our ideas that--that's to pay attention to the Central Valley.

Morris: Someplace besides Fresno?

Coffey: Someplace besides Fresno to have a meeting, at the old hotel there. It was very well attended. That was where we unleashed Alan Cranston. Pierre Salinger sat and wrote the speech, listened to the thoughts expressed by Alan and George jointly about what the keynoter would be, went into another room, and came back in twenty minutes with a draft. He was a very fast writer. Alan did the speech with his own editing, because Alan increasingly wrote his own stuff; he still does.

Morris: He comes from a journalistic background.

Coffey: He's a writer. Yes, he was fundamentally a writer. He had some small business interests, but it really never amounted to very much. It was journalistic interests. I was the guy that constantly sat them down [and said], "Get into a public office. Get into running for office." I saw people like him and Bill Matson Roth and others as potential candidates. And Alan really hasn't changed. He's still the consummate WASP, very cool, meticulous guy.

Morris: Did you say WASP?

Coffey: Yes, yes. I say it in a friendly sense. Of course, he has a very--he's got a concern for people. He has strong feelings for people, but he's not demonstrative, very cool, works terribly hard, not lazy. There's no question that this guy could win some office.

He only lost the controller's race after he was in it because of loyalty and stupidity. He had \$10,000, and instead of spending it in his own campaign he gave it to Pat's campaign for a mailing down south, and then lost his election by a few votes. I remember questioning him in Orinda. I said, "Pat will take care of himself. He always has. Alan, you could be taken. This is a bad year." And he was taken. So, we've had kind of a friendship over the years. All of these fellows, you're friendly, and that's it.

But anyway, back in Stockton, that's when we kicked it off. Alan became the president of the CDC. For a number of years it gave a lot of leadership. We ended the crossfiling. That's its greatest contribution historically. It built the concept of party as a result and encouraged volunteerism. Then, of course, it got hung up on the rocks of China policy and the foreign policy division, that the men, former beneficiaries of CDC, like Pat Brown, like Dick Richards, like Alan Cranston and others, broke with its militant foreign policy positions.

Morris: When you say they broke, ran into trouble on China policy, was this a--?

Coffey: They broke. Yes, well, there was strong feeling for--. This was the days of HUAC. This was the days of [Joseph] McCarthy. This was the days of talking about China being part of the world community, of recognizing Red China, doing business with China, on a question of peace throughout the world. This was a large concern among people who were attracted to CDC, not just social issues. They always were involved with resolutions on social issues. But that didn't bother the now-established leadership as much as being placed in a position of defending CDC on foreign policy.

So as a result there was a division in CDC, and CDC has gone downhill ever since over foreign policy disputes. Their last big claim to fame was endorsing, I guess, George McGovern and George carrying the state. But it's been downhill since.

Morris: Was your feeling that a state volunteer organization should not be involved in foreign policy?

Coffey: No, that was not my feeling. No, I was always concerned with international affairs. I always felt that it was an integral part of it, but I'm merely reporting to you that was the objective analysis that--. I remember Alan--you know, [he] is a foreign policy buff; that's his whole interest--coming before them and speaking against motions for recognition of China, etc.

The feeling was that this would be divisive, that we couldn't hold our seats that way. There was a backlash developing. There was rationale to their position, because history proved it correct. We then did go down to smashing defeats over our concern for fair employment practices, the bringing of blacks into, not only the party, but into the mainstream of our life.

That's why when you hear of Ben Hooks from NAACP screaming these days about the relationship of blacks to the Democratic party, this is a constant historical cycle. Every generation of black leaders has to take somebody on, and every party is vulnerable.

There's no question in my mind that one of the reasons for Pat Brown's demise in that third term was the identifying of him as, quote, on the street as a nigger lover, close quote. These terms were used, and we wince at those words, but they were used. It was played very well by Reagan. We were giving away too many things, you know.

Coffey: Pat Brown was a builder. He came at a time in California life when the state was growing and people were watching the population growth like a scoreboard, like their home-town team winning. You drove over the bridge and it said, you know, X millions, and every minute it would change. So, he built the roads and built the schools. I must say, he must be given tremendous amount of credit as a builder of California.

Coming back to the CDC, Brown was elected, Cranston now was a political leader, etc. We now gained influence in the legislative process, we then had a governor, and it became such that these positions on what is called the left were disconcerting, to say the least, to the leadership, and they were constantly--

Morris: Leadership in the Democratic party?

Coffey: No, leadership in terms of people elected. I don't look upon a party in this state as some narrow thing called the California Democratic State Central Committee, which I head. The public vision is the California Democratic party, and the vision of who is the party is the people you elect every two years or every four years. So, I'm using it in that sense, not some unknown people that might be head of CDC, but people who are elected to office.

They became very nervous. They were more conservative about that, although many of them were sympathetic--to, say, recognition of China or to social programs, but wanted to cool it because they sensed, as people now get on the anti-tax program, they were trying to get on the anti-Red bandwagon. Red meant China; it meant FEPC; it meant all kinds of things, you know, social programs.

Morris: What did CDC do for funding?

Coffey: Membership. Have clubs. Clubs would pay dues. Some of that dues would go to CDC. They would put on fund-raising events. But they never really had the clout, because they always had to go to the incumbents to help them raise money.

Morris: What's what I wondered.

Coffey: Exactly. They'd want to put out a slate card, and you wanted to have that endorsement, particularly in the primary, see, where you can't use official party designations. So, there was all that shenanigans, which isn't a good word, but getting together to raise money to support people. There would be conventions. They would nominate people. We'd have district-wide conventions to nominate people, which was in addition to the nominating process we go through on the June ballot. They would endorse candidates.

- Morris: So, they would have to go to--?
- Coffey: They would have to go to those people they endorsed for money.
- Morris: Unofficially to the regular Democrats to get money.
- Coffey: Oh, sure. Well, call them what you want. They'd have to go to the nominees, and later on incumbents, who were their friends. I remember many times having to raise \$900 or \$1,000 because they never raised enough money--

Political Giving

- Coffey: Political giving is very difficult. It's only in recent years that you find some new wealth that is not lobby-oriented, but oriented on issues in this state and in the East. These people will give money to certain candidates, but basically the liberal dilemma was its inability to spend as much money on the party as it does on the latest fashion or going out for a ride to a good dinner, and thinking that a ten-, fifteen-dollar contribution was really all one should do.

In Santa Barbara, for example, that's still the situation. You ask people holding office down there: "I can't run anything over \$15"; they think it's horrible. People don't understand the need to sacrifice, just as the right sacrifices. The right is much more generous and sacrificial, because I think they believe more strongly. It's sympathetic. It's a simple sympathy they have on certain issues. That's why Richard Viguerie is so successful, but that's another subject.

- Morris: I'm interested that you speak in terms of sacrifices and the right, because the general image of the right is that it's well-heeled; you know, rich Republicans.
- Coffey: It's well-heeled because there are always wealthy forces in a country that will subsidize right-wing activities; increasingly there are people who will tithe to the right as they do to a church. They get a letter--they get on a list. These letters, and I would hope that you've seen them--I don't keep a file, but in the last year I've gotten letters from the Jesse Helms group, the Meldrim Thomson group, the Republican fund raisers that are signed by, whether it be Jerry Ford or Hayakawa.

Coffey: I got one this morning with a phony targeting sheet of getting liberal Democrats out of office and electing these Republicans, saying that all these Republicans had a great chance if you would give some money. Every week there's something going out through the computer, not only in California but through Richie Viguerie.

It's interesting that he reinvests that money back into further list development as issues arise. Andy Young, for example. You get an issue on Andy Young in the mail, and it gets tremendous support because it says he's really a Communist and he's really helping the guerillas in South Africa. They enclose a picture of a mutilated child which indicates that this child was mutilated by the liberalisms of an Andrew Young and then ask you to send money.

Then they code all these things, and they've got a sophisticated list. They don't net a lot, but it's volume. They make a little on a lot. At this point in time a lot of that money is not going down below, but goes to consistently build lists.

You have the same thing that has been done for H.L. Richardson, Senator Richardson, who has a business in Sacramento. He's going to allegedly raise \$1 million to defeat Rose Bird. They develop very conservative issues. He's the Gun Owners of America; he's the Gun Owners of California. They don't meet, like our people meet, to decide where money goes. They meet in a phone booth and decide where it goes. We have people who have told us. I have friends who like to hunt, and they've given \$25 to help protect the gun owner, the rifleman, that they talk about. They find that he has given money against friends of theirs who are Democrats.

Morris: They're now on the mailing list.

Coffey: They're on the mailing list. Yes, they get a mailing list, and he decides where the money goes, and he runs it as a side business. His father is part of it. I'm not saying that he's doing anything dishonest, but I do know that it's a business and he's developing mailing lists.

So the right has done that and they react more to these issues than I think that the liberal does in the country, recently anyway. The biggest expression I think the liberals gave was during the McGovern campaign, and that was because of the overriding issue of Vietnam. But you've got to have some issue. That's why it's very difficult for us to raise money.

Coffey: I did very well in putting out one letter to about 1,500 contributors selected by us from people, a lot of them from Southern California, who gave money to various presidential candidates, whether it be Jackson or others. Okay? So, it was from liberal, moderate, to conservative.

Morris: This was in the last--?

Coffey: Just before No on 13, during the primary. I sent a very strong letter saying, "The Democratic party has been praised editorially for its positions opposing 13," and so forth, and asking them to send from \$100 to \$200 to us. It was not a \$15 list. These were people who give money, individuals who are wealthy. Some were Hollywood people. We got \$3,500 back out of 1,500 letters, which was not bad. Some people would send more than we asked for because nobody had asked them for money, you see, and they responded. Some people would say, "Well, Bert, not with you on this one," particularly some builders who would be with me on some other things.

What I'm saying is that our fund raising is not as sophisticated and not as good. It's a tragedy for me to sit here as a Democratic chairman and say that we rely so much upon corporate giving, and we go through this spiel up and down the state, and we really act upon it. If these people give us \$1,000 we don't ask for more, north or south, and \$100 clubs, and we make available every government official that comes through, so they have accessibility. I believe in that in principle, but what I'm hoping to leave this party with is a funding base that will not rely on corporate giving to the extent where it plays a role in our percentage of money raised to support our modest activities in the state.

[What I meant by that was that I wanted to establish a reliable funding base. We got a professional telephonic service that solicited contributions--there is a 50% overhead, but it provides enough for minimal office staffing; and payroll deductions--that's the VIP program; as well as the usual events. And my successor has agreed to stay with the phone program, which has kept the staff alive. But we are in a period when the party is not popular, which makes it harder, even though we've never had assured funding.]

[You mentioned that Jim Mills suggests there are fairly regular party voting cycles. There is an underlying base of people who vote with the party, but there is a growing number of people who are not satisfied, "fed up with government," and some of the reforms we've made are leading to party weakness. Jim is right about cycles if he's referring to times when the party comes up

Coffey: with a charismatic figure or a clod as top candidate, but even then Democrats are still elected down below. You see a cycle like this in special elections, not so much in Congress. In '76 we were losing a bunch of seats when people died or dropped out of a race, and the Republicans had the money to move in and take it.

[Things are happening now that are unexpected. We've had independent candidates before, but now they're getting support that would punish the party. For instance, Reagan couldn't beat Carter, but Anderson could. And it would be a disaster. More traditionally, after the convention, Democratic candidates have tended to move toward the views of independent challengers; since the war, that's been to the left.

[It's hard to say whether I used things as party chairman myself that I picked up working with George or that I accumulated on my own. There are new conditions, and the party was much smaller then. I went in knowing the limitations of the job and made specific suggestions, with Leo's help, for reforms needed for eighteen years. The question is whether you're going to be a caretaker or provide leadership.

[After the next reapportionment, there may have to be some restructuring. The present county structure reflects the old, nonpartisan stance, but the smallest political district is the assembly district; down the road the party maybe should eliminate some duplicate functions to recognize this, even though it'll cause problems. John Miller recently issued a decision that the party should stop being active in nonpartisan local elections, but some attorneys think it's appealable. Until the party can make decisions at all levels, it can't be effective; it would also need money for party media. It's never been easy, but we might try things like a lottery for candidates' position on the ballot or smaller than countywide election districts, where people running for party positions would have a better chance of gaining name recognition.
BC 3/31/80]

I probably will be the first chairman that will leave--well, the party won't be the same, won't be the same. The party in the past, you see--I don't say this in a self-serving way. You pick a few issues--

Democratic State Central Committee Reforms, 1954 and 1978

Morris: There's a tradition that the Democratic party in California has not been unified and has not been well organized.

Coffey: That's true, and the ideological draft that I described before also permeated the official party. Keep in mind when you talk about the Democratic party--and people even as sophisticated as you do not recognize that it is largely appointive, that 94 percent of its membership is appointive, and the only elected people are the nominees and the county chairs.

Morris: This is the state central committee?

Coffey: This is the state central committee, which publicly is envisioned as the California Democratic party. That's why the press calls me, because I'm chairman of that party. So, I have gone about, after eighteen years of failures of various people including Petris, Dymally, Moscone, Bradley, others, to reform the party. I used strong influence to get a modest measure in before there would be a blow-up, like lawsuits and etc., as they've had in other states. So, rather than change the party to what I would like to see it be, or in my image, I just proposed that we reduce the question to a circle and draw a line down the circle in the middle and 50 percent would be appointed by the legislators and the other 50 percent determined by a joint meeting which I was mandated to call--it wasn't my idea; had been mandated to call--of state committee members and county committee members. There had never been a representative meeting like that in California.

That meeting took place January 21, [1978], at the San Francisco airport with about nine hundred participants who had been meeting in their local districts. We came up with the division of this circle to fifty-fifty, 25 [percent] to come from assembly district caucuses, called by leadership; 25 percent out of central committees, who are elected. Theoretically, down the road some years from now, by giving certain appointments to, certain elective possibilities to, the central committee, who in themselves are elected, you might get better, stronger, more active people running for central committees because they'll have a chance to be on the state committee.

The assembly district will open up the thing, particularly to those who may be frozen out in the appointive process. The candidate says, "Well, I've appointed two people of the opposite sex. Now I've got to appoint a Chicano; well, gee, or a black; or, gee, an Oriental." Well, you can't cut it that way. This way I think we're going to open the door and make sure that more Chicanos come in, more people with Spanish surnames, run in these things, and by organization, by getting their people there and by the leadership or whatever it may be in the district at that time collaborating or cooperating, we'll be able to elect more people from different ethnic groups who are so important to the future of the Democratic party.

Coffey: The margin of victory for Governor [Jerry] Brown this year could be to the extent we register the black and brown population and get those folks out to vote.

Morris: Yesterday I was reading Elizabeth Snyder's platform when she was running for chairman in '54.

Coffey: Yes, yes. I see Liz. I haven't seen her for a long time. What did she say?

Morris: She was trying to accomplish the same thing.

Coffey: Liz was a pro. Liz later went into business. She's a very bright woman. She's still active, like in ERA stuff, etc. I haven't seen her lately, but I was glad to have her endorsement when I ran for state chair. Yes, she knew, just what we're talking about. It's nothing new.

It's just that what I'm going to leave now is the fact that I got this bill. The Speaker [Leo McCarthy] authored it. We made a--how do I describe it to you--a rural allowance so that they aren't wiped out completely by one person-one vote, so the counties would have some base in this new legislation, the new committee. It's now in the senate. I have about eighteen, nineteen votes. I do not have President Pro Tem Jim Mills and I will not get him. I think I will have support from some Republicans, and I therefore will get a bill and the Governor will sign it, and we will have a different kind of party. It'll either be Coffey's folly or Coffey's something-or-other.

But I'm responding, and that's what leadership mainly is. I'm responding to a long-felt need. The left wanted for years a more democratic party, rooted in precincts. Well, so do reformers whether they're left or not. Like other states--the caucus system in Iowa or in New Mexico. But you can't do that overnight. You can't take, in a nonpatronage state, that little thing legislators have. They can appoint you if you're active in their campaign. So, we keep that.

What I did is I doubled the size of the convention. I gave them an offer they can't refuse, but then that was diminished by the legislative leaders themselves, saying 2,500 would be too many people.

[telephone interruption, tape off]

Coffey: Leo [McCarthy] and Assemblyman [Richard] Lehman thought that was kind of a large, unmanageable number of people to have at a convention and expensive, etc. I allowed how, well, it was their decision to make the legislative proposal. To my pleasant surprise

Coffey: they bought our formula and reduced it to the size of the current convention, reduced voluntarily the legislative appointive powers, so we're still with the fifty-fifty approximately.

Morris: Local appointees and state appointees.

Coffey: Yes, 50 percent state appointees, incumbents, nominees; 50 percent local, AD, county committee, with a factor for rural participation. We had to go to our executive board meeting with that. Nancy Pelosi carried on for me, our northern chair, who is a very, very effective woman. She carried on for me while I was running the meeting. We were having running sessions with the L.A. people who I was very concerned about because--. They're tremendous folks; they were not tremendously helpful in putting across this proposal of ours because they never liked our original proposal. They were talking about suing the party, "getting the legislature completely out of our business," etc., etc.

I kind of won by patient discussion with its leader and its reformer. I put reformers on this committee, and the reformers, I pounded at them. I said, in front of their CDC president, Mrs. Albertson, "I want to remind you this is not a CDC party. This is not a CDC club. We're talking about making legislative recommendations, and I'm tired of seeing you people lose. I want to win. Now let's get to work." With that then I shut up, and they went to work.

And it evolved. It was beautiful to see it evolve. The anger, everybody having a different idea, including my son, including others, whose ideas I tended to support. But I just sat there, and out of it came what I just told you, fifty-fifty. Now I'm sure we're going to come out of the senate. I'm sure if it does Jerry will sign it.

[Yes, the Governor did sign the bill. We had a struggle with it; McCarthy and Senator Wilson were a big help. You could say that I ran an illegal convention, let history show, but I gave everyone what they wanted, plus reform. Of course Jerry signed it; he would never give me trouble on reform; intrinsically he's for reform.

[You know, we did have an impact on his 1978 campaign; he took on someone from the party. I broke the Younger Hawaii story during the campaign, and I went around the state for Jerry. He does have some feeling for traditions. He sent me some notes and we had a strange conversation on his constitutional amendment for a balanced budget. I told him that the early primary states would think he's

Coffey: flaky for this idea and I couldn't support him for president. This election tells you that people's perception of candidates is the new significant factor. And that the old TV is not the new TV--reporters are out looking for stories, and if they find one, they can make you in a week. BC 3/31/80]

Let me make one final point that's the biggest sleeper. My predecessors tried to do it, and they never were able to accomplish it. In the code we designate that we shall meet in Sacramento at such a date for the state meeting and the chairman of the party shall come from a certain part of the state and that after that term of two years is concluded it goes from the north to the south or vice versa. I want you to know that ain't in our bill.

Morris: Really?

Coffey: It ain't in our bill.

Morris: I would think the people in the north might have some anxiety about that.

Coffey: I would think they would, and I think some people in the south would have anxieties on it. But again, my consultant Ed Costantini and I both philosophically agreed that while it's difficult, let's take a try at it and let's eliminate all references, as much as possible, to party in the election code and let--outside of "there shall be a party"--let us decide our future, let us do our by-laws and our rules, run the party. And that's where we are now and it's out.

Morris: Great. Let me ask you--

Coffey: As a matter of fact, this morning I was meeting--among the things I discussed was to take a new look at our rules committee and kick off those people that don't come to meetings and don't serve, also to make sure I have balance on it and not just, "We'll appoint," for example, "two women to it."

Women Committeemembers and Candidates

Coffey: Women have a very increasing role in politics today. It's very funny when some women who are not active in the party write letters and give me that castrating line about the party system and women; I invite them to come to one of our meetings and see what I'm surrounded by. Out of thirteen officers, I've got ten who are women. The treasurer is a woman; I have a vice-chair that's a woman. I have a northern chair that's a woman. And all different kinds of people.

Morris: Why is that do you think?

Coffey: It's evolved. It's evolved. I wouldn't say it evolved because of the liberation movement reaching a certain point. I would say it evolved at a particular convention because particular people with particular genes were out there pushing, you know. The rules said, "State chair male; vice-chair female." Okay. "Northern chair--" Leo liked Nancy. Nancy wasn't that well known. The Governor liked Nancy. It was Nancy. See? So, we have Nancy in the north. In the south we've got a male. Then we have a women's division, which we are abolishing hopefully, just getting rid of it.

Morris: Bringing the women into the mainstream?

Coffey: Oh, yes. What is this need, you know? You're not going to have any cookie parties. It's separate; it draws money; it doesn't function like it should or could; and it just seems to me we don't need a women's division. Most of the militant women agree with us. There will be some that say, "Well, we still need it." But there's no reason why they can't have a women's caucus. See, we are a caucus party. I have now a gay caucus, black caucus, Chicano caucus, labor caucus, and the women meet as a caucus. Each caucus is on our agenda and they come in with proposals. So, that's what I think it will be.

So, I'm only saying the women play a very important role in the party. It isn't like it was in the past, you know, where they were just running headquarters. No, it's a policy position.

Morris: There still aren't very many women as candidates.

Coffey: That is the fault, I think, of the success of the Democrats in recent years. If dark days fall upon the party and we lose a number of seats, just remember what I said to you on this afternoon, that two years from now you're going to have--in every one of those districts, you're going to have women running.

Morris: That's what I've heard before, that the party is willing to back a woman if they don't think they're going to win the election.

Coffey: No, that is not--that's another one of those castrating developments which is not intellectually sound or factually correct. For example, the party gave \$45,000 through McCarthy to Betty Smith, who is our treasurer, incidentally, in Chico, because the figures showed she had a chance. I can show you lists right here that I had this morning that make a very cold-turkey analysis of every district. What's the percentages? How much money has the person got? How much money do they owe? You know, maybe if I get a

Coffey: little tough on my response to that, it's only because I have a little extra knowledge when I see here what a fellow or a gal has going in a campaign, percentages, money, etc. So, Betty got substantial funds last time.

[McCarthy and the legislative team became more sensitive to the need for more women candidates. There are a lot of bright women in politics these days, in elections, managers in campaigns, and a stream of legislative consultants. Out of this will come more women as candidates. After reapportionment, there will be more women running in safe Democratic districts and in open districts, with party support. Women say they have little opportunity to raise money, but I've known some very tough women fund raisers.

[Look back and see all the women serving in local government. Yes, after reapportionment, there will be more women and more Hispanics in office. In the party structure, women have been more important since the '72 reforms, whose positive side was to open things up. BC 3/31/80]

Cindy Weir, who's running against what is called an unbeatable guy, Mr. Paul Bannai, down in the Gardena area--it's a 70 percent Democratic district and she lost it two years ago by a few thousand votes--it's been decided to target her and put her on the list.

Coming back to what I said before, if you hear me and understand what I'm saying, where you have fifty-seven Democratic seats in the legislature, what is left ain't very good, you see. Even in the fifty-seven, you've got some very marginal areas where people who are self-starters, not the party, won. Keep in mind--if I leave you with anything--that in this state as in others there is a grand duchy system. That grand duchy is the congressional district, the assembly district, or the senatorial district. The leadership of that district is in the hands of the incumbent. That incumbent is indeed the Democratic party of that district. There can be clubs, there can be activities, strong clubs, weak clubs, but that's fundamentally it.

Now, it is not a party that goes to Mary Jones and says, "Mary, run." It's Mary evaluating her district and saying, just like a man, "I think I can take this." And she starts a campaign; and she wins the nomination or what have you and gets some help; and then she's in the ball game, if she's got a district.

I have here district reviews of the targeted areas, which is a confidential thing that comes out of the legislative leadership. A typical analysis, so you know specifically what I'm talking about and why I think I'm right in what my predictions are, is

Coffey: that some of these people could very well lose because of anti-incumbency that's going to work against people. The marginal districts are going to be tough, or if they haven't done their homework, or the opposition is very good and very well financed, or some other fact of life that causes their defeat.

I'm just saying that with the state of the women's movement now there probably will be women that will emerge in those districts because a Democrat held it before and let's see if we can take a sock at it or a try at it. I would assume that not only will they be looking for women like that (if indeed there is a party apparatus that does that or the legislative leadership) to help women there, because when you have fifty-seven seats--.

I called Alice Travis when she was elected [to state Democratic committee] and said, "Alice, one of your big problems this year is, where are you going to encourage women to run?" So, you have Sandy Baldonado who ran (well, she ran before and lost) and you have Cindy Weir running where she lost before. The figures are very strongly in favor of Cindy, not in favor of Sandy. They're very narrow, but Sandy will get substantially more money this time than last time because she ran well, and Cindy will get substantially, not substantially, a tremendous amount more money, to keep her opponent busy in spending money and also a chance to offset a loss in other places.

I think I'm right because what I have observed is there are a lot of women running in the Republican party, and not because they're liberal in terms of women and attitudes toward women, but that they hardly have any seats to own and women just file and some of them are very strong. Jean Morehead against Ben Franklin. Then they have Alma Clark, who is no contest with Bill Lockyer. Beverly Redgwick against Floyd Mori. Doherty against Lou Papan in a 60 percent Democratic district. I can go on. Then Carol Hallett, of course, an incumbent. There's Dolores Lefebre running in a 60 percent Democratic district. Nancy Allen in a black area, ridiculous, 74 percent district, you know, no votes. Marilyn Ryan is a Republican who's in a nip and tuck fight to maintain that seat. She opposed Proposition 13 [1978], a moderate Republican, a League of Women Voters type, running against a conservative Democrat. Now, in Paul Bannai's district where Cindy is running, we have a 70.1 registration. Just this morning I wrote to the senator of that district saying, "Look, could you please meet with her, try to help?" She's not a friend of mine particularly. As a matter of fact, she didn't support me for the chairmanship.

But the point I'm trying to make is that, you see, what I'm showing you here, when you've got the Jackies, the Marys, and all these women running: Doris. Imagine how many--I'm reading to you just now. And Virginia Bridge, Lorraine Green. There's opportunity. The guys have given up, right?

Coffey: But in our situation if we lose four or five seats in marginal areas where we have Democratic registration--we can win that seat, come post-Jarvis-Gann, come the realization of what that is going to do to this state. I think that is two years down the road. Then I think that we're going to see more Democratic women coming to the fore. We've got the talent. We've got the talent. Not as many running this time because there's less opportunity.

You can't, for example, take good legislators who are male and say, "Quit the job because this woman's going to run." You know, we're reaching the sophistication as to examine why. Is she better? Is she going to do more? The point is: not when you compare some of the records of some of our people on women issues. So therefore you got to say, if some people lose then they'll come in. It's going to be a natural life cycle. I see much more of that in the state because we're going to lose some seats.

II PERSONAL BACKGROUND, POLITICAL FRIENDSHIP

George Miller, Jr., and George Miller III##

- Morris: Did you grow up here in Richmond and know George Miller, [Jr.]--?
- Coffey: No. I met George in 1943-44. I came out here as an organizer for the oil workers' organizing campaign which zeroed in on Standard Oil. I had left law school to do what I thought I wanted to do and that was get into the labor movement. George was--I guess he was a personnel or labor relations guy for Kaiser Shipyards, which employed 92,000 people. He was about twenty-seven, I guess, when I met him, already with a few kids and a very, very bad case of psoriasis, which was so terribly bad, that he lived with, that it was just incredible that he maintained any equilibrium.
- Morris: It's a miserable kind of an ailment.
- Coffey: Very, and he had the kind, the worst. And with the kids plus that, plus the shipyards, the army said, "Look, you know--"
- Morris: We don't need you?
- Coffey: Yes, it would be incredible. I traveled with him, lived with him, and saw a trail every morning, when we shared motels, of skin on the floor. I think that led to his heart attack five years before he died and then later his massive heart attack.
- Morris: Did it also contribute to the kind of energy and dedication that goes with political life?
- Coffey: No. I think that it just showed his greatness was able to overcome that disability. It was terrible. I would see him literally, as a very macho man, with tears, you know, at times, and that rubbing. I'd see him in the hospital with it, experimenting with all kinds

Coffey: of stuff, and drinking to wipe it out, and then saying to me, "Let's not kid ourselves. Sure, I drink to wipe that out so that I can go to sleep. But I feel worse the next day. So, who's kidding who? Who's kidding who? It makes a bum out of you, makes an alcoholic out of you." He tried all kinds of things.

But he was a very, very bright, sensitive guy. The public perception, as he got older, as a tough, hard-hitting legislator overlooked completely his tremendous sensitivity to people and events. Before he died he was thinking of--. It was a Friday night before New Year's [December, 1968]. We gathered together some old friends: Hal Winkler, myself, Don Bradley, who always ended up in a terrible argument with George, just incredible.

Morris: Did they disagree?

Coffey: Well, it was a strange friendship. George had a great love for Irish lore and liked to consider himself an Irishman, although he was half German in ancestry, and Bradley being Irish, they would drink and actually physically assault each other. Really, you know--he'd say, "God damn it, I thought I was going to break his jaw the other night."

I'd say, "Oh, don't tell me about your relationship, will you, with Don." They were very close that way.

Our relation was totally different. As a result, my relationship with some of his friends was never good because they always kind of--

Morris: Some of Bradley's friends?

Coffey: Yes. Or George's friends looked at me a little different because I always had this different relationship with George that they could not understand. They really couldn't understand it until after he died. And that his son understood. Of course, the son knew the father, and the father knew the son. It was just a totally different relationship. I was not his drinking buddy. I was not his Irish, son-of-a-bitch-it-up buddy. I was more--like his late mother once said, "It's interesting that here you two kids come from different parts of the world. You come from New York and here George was born here. He's Catholic and you come out of a Jewish tradition, and yet I never saw two people more like brothers."

It was that kind of family thing. We never, as we were developing our families after I got married, [would] see each other every day or every week or every month. But we always were there, always were there. We always had an independent judgment, respect, for

- Coffey: one another. But if George did something I didn't like, it was pretty well known to him that I didn't like it, but don't you tell George it wasn't right.
- Morris: It's all right for you to.
- Coffey: It was all right for me, but don't anybody take him on because you had me to consider. It was that kind of thing. It was very strange. So, I in turn sublimated myself to him. But after a while, and people will recognize it, the political relationship cooled in the sense of ambition, not in terms of friendship, but in my recognition that he was not going to seek higher office.
- Morris: Why not?
- Coffey: I remember talking to him one night about the recognition early in life that he's not a wealthy man, that he had a flock of children, that the state provided a decent pension, that he didn't expect to live long, that his father and his father before his father died of bad hearts at about fifty-five, fifty-six. He at that time was probably no more than thirty-five, thirty-six. He already had been considered, was a statewide candidate for lieutenant governor, made a tremendous amount of friends. He couldn't win, but he had friends in every part of the state, always a core of people I still see. They say, "You're from Richmond, California. Are you the Bert Coffey that was a friend of George Miller? Oh, he was great." This is San Diego, guys that worked in his campaign as kids.

He had this charisma, before they developed the word, and intelligence. He told me that to take care of the family and to have a pension would probably be the most important thing unless, you know, you came into a tremendous amount of money, that money was a key to it, and that he wasn't in that position and didn't think he ever would be. It was only the last few years of his life that he became concerned about money and through some associations at home with a neighbor who was in real estate worked out something. So he left his family with the state pension, took care of Dorothy, left probably--in these days it's nothing--a quarter-of-a-million-dollar estate, which is ridiculous when you think one house is worth that today and it isn't that long. He left a nice home, which he loved, and said he wanted to die there the Friday before he died.

Always had that Irish, lonely, half-alcohol expression. When he walked down the park going to the hotel in the evening, he'd have his arm around me and say, "Bert, I'm going to be the first to go on this team," you know, always that, and in his usual

Coffey: beautiful vulgarity, which is now becoming more popular, expressed what I'd be doing over his grave, but that to make sure I take care of some things and all that, make sure that Georgie goes to law school and things like that.

Morris: In that sense, you are keeping an eye on his son who has carried on the political--

Coffey: Yes, yes, yes. I do less now. Psychologically, I think it's very important that he do his own thing, and he does. I have little or no input into his political life except that I spent two years of my life helping him get elected to Congress.

Morris: Did you?

Coffey: Oh, yes. He came up here one day. We had talked earlier when Waldie was running for governor. I allowed how Waldie would not pull out, knowing Waldie's character, that he would go through that routine that he and others--

Morris: He wouldn't resign?

Coffey: Well, no, not resign. But he and others, who--every ten years a man has to decide what to do with his life. They never thought that you can do one thing in your life and do it well, but they always had to go on. That's what caused Jesse Unruh to become a very bitter treasurer instead of a United States Senator or something else, but it was, "I've got to be governor." Jerry Waldie is probably in the same place.

So, I told George that I'd been working with Moscone and to finish his law school. We were very worried about whether he'd go back to law school after he ran that race for the state senate when he was twenty-three years old.* Anyway, he ran for that because he didn't think anybody was good enough to take his father's seat. If there was somebody good enough, he wouldn't run. Like if Jack Knox ran, he wouldn't run. But then we were worried about him going back to law school. He went back to law school. His mom had a few bucks, not much. But he went to law school at Davis, and I got him a job with George Moscone, on his legislative staff in Sacramento. He worked like a dog, the kid. He'd get up at six in the morning, went to law school, worked hard, had two kids.

*Seventh Senatorial District special election, March, 1969.

Coffey: Then we talked about Waldie. I've got to tell you that in those four or five years I never thought that George would ever go into politics. [I thought] that he'd become a lawyer, finish off with Moscone, go into some law firm, because he had a good family name--

Morris: Good connections from working with Moscone?

Coffey: Yes, but not the kind that he would use, knowing philosophically where he was at. He'd probably go back home and practice law with somebody. That's what I thought.

But, you know, politics is unpredictable. I always tell young people, "Don't make all these plans. You never know when someone dies. You never know when anything happens." They live like a storybook. George didn't live that way.

So, we had dinner one night, and we talked about options, and I laid it out to him. I just said, "Here are the options." It's a question of what you want to do.

But he lost his very articulate style he had as a young man at twenty-three and became a lawyer who was kind of mumbling through days of work, getting up at six in the morning, doing his homework, and doing all of George's [Moscone's] legislative work basically, doing all the great bills. Young George was doing them. And he became the student. This big football-player type became the student. His mind would work so heavily that when he would talk I'd start to listen to him kind of stumble, "Uh, uh, uh, well, uh." And here was a kid that would do a tape cold on television, live, in one take at the age of twenty-three, and here he is--. Before he was running for Congress, I said, "My God, George." You know [chuckling], just a change, more academic, more studious.

Anyway we talked and then he came up here one evening. Obviously, our relationship was established. We didn't see each other too often, but sometimes he would stay with me if I went to Sacramento; I had a place there. It was just like with a father. We knew where we each were. We were family, we were close, but we didn't breathe on each other, okay? That's the word.

He came up here one night, and when he left I went in the next room. I had tears. I went to the john and washed my face off because he was going to be twenty-eight years old, and I had found an old poster of his father when he was twenty-eight, running for the assembly.

Coffey: I said, "Do you know, you son of a gun, that you're the same age George was when he went--I stayed here in town, came back again from New York to work for your dad." And here he is--we decided that night he was going to run for Congress [1974].

Experiences in Union Organizing, Communist Political Association,
and Public Relations

Morris: You didn't stay in union organizing?

Coffey: Oh, no, no. I left in May, I guess, of '46. They wanted me to go to Louisiana to Baton Rouge to organize. There was a Jim Crow local and a non-Jim Crow local. That's what they did in the South.

Morris: A black one and a white one.

Coffey: Black and white. Colored one, they said. I just thought it was time for me to leave the union. I settled here, and George and I went into business; George Miller, Jr., and I went into business in '46. We opened up a--he had a building his grandma had owned at 1016 Nevin Avenue, which has now got a contemporary building that he and I built that I rented and then got out and had the family sell to a black fellow. And we opened up there. We had a direct-mail advertising business.

Morris: How did you happen to pick that kind of business?

Coffey: Because that was my direction. I had always been involved in public relations, for lack of a better term. At college I was running for offices and getting elected to office and writing on the paper, yearbook. I come, organize, and I was writing leaflets instead of novels, and handing things out at oil refineries around the country.

Morris: So you saw labor organizing, union organizing, as a kind of public relations--?

Coffey: I guess, in retrospect. I don't think I used the word then. I would just say--

Morris: Nor I.

Coffey: --simply I was an organizer. One of my jobs was to--I succeeded a famous newspaper guild guy in Elizabeth, New Jersey, the Bayview plant, who--I sat in his chair and I remember this guy--he sat

Coffey: \$25 a week too. That was Milton Kaufman, who was a successor to Heywood Broun at the New York Guild. I was writing things. I said, "Gee, I'm getting paid for doing things I used to do for nothing," exhorting people to join something. That was my background plus education. So George and I decided to go into business together.

Morris: He'd had enough of Kaiser Shipyards?

Coffey: He was offered--. Yes. He was a very questioning guy. With his times he was very liberal. He didn't want to work for the Standard Oil Company. He finished three years--

Morris: This was when Kaiser Shipyards shut down?

Coffey: Well, before they shut down he--he could have stayed. He could have stayed with Kaiser. He could have gone off to Standard Oil. He was a local boy, attractive, educated, had family. They knew him to be a Democrat, which was equivalent to being a Red, by the establishment of the town. But he could have gotten in any law office he wanted to in town, if he took the bar exam. He was smart enough to pass the bar exam but said, "I don't want to be a lawyer."

So that was another thing. I spent two years at law school. He graduated night law school, after Boalt, worked as a twenty-seven-year-old collector of Internal Revenue here. He got to know people all over, played cards with the boys of the Elks Club. The first year he was married, Dorothy said he didn't know he was married. He'd run out and play cards and then come home, you know. It was that kind of thing. Just a wild kid, but always a Democrat and always a social concern. We would sit all night and talk about politics. He was chairman of the party of the county [Contra Costa] when he was with Kaiser.

Morris: Was Kaiser as strong as Standard Oil about Democrat was Red.

Coffey: No, no. They were doing government business. They didn't care at that time. Ed Kaiser gave money to Roosevelt, I guess. They didn't care.

Morris: Was Standard--?

Coffey: Standard was very conservative. Then his association with me, and I was in their book as one of the guys that organized. For twenty years they hated my guts.

Morris: The New York Times index has a headline saying that you were a Communist party member until 1946.* Is that a verifiable thing?

Coffey: Yes. Oh, yes. The New York Times index?

Morris: Yes.

Coffey: That's right, there was a wire service story. Yes, what I did--it was before '46, but I wouldn't take any risk of giving a year where some stooge would say, "Well, I was at a meeting in '46." My exact line was, "To the best of my knowledge some time in the winter of, I think, '46 I left the party." What had happened, actually, for about a year and a half or two I hardly had gone to any local meetings. I used to go and talk to some of the folks. It was kind of interesting. That was during the days when it was called the Communist Political Association.

Morris: Communist Political Association?

Coffey: Yes. Remember, for the sake of winning the war, the American Communist party separated itself from the Comintern. The Comintern was dissolved as a gesture from Stalin to say, "You see, we're going to cooperate in the post-war world and not interfere with other people's events or countries." So, it really became, under Earl Browder, the Communist Political Association. But nobody ever bothers to make the distinction. It really isn't that important. It really isn't that important.

Morris: Was it primarily out here or had you gotten interested--?

Coffey: Oh, I had always been interested in social reform and socialism as a subject and philosophy, despite my education being contrary to that. But it was always interesting to me and I read. I was very upset--I don't want to go into the whole litany of all the things I was upset about. If you read, you know they're in there in what I've said. I thought that was an expression of it.

I agreed with what Browder had said, in my presence when he spoke at a college campus, that the Communist party of America would accept coming to leadership through only one procedure and that is by getting 50 percent plus one of the votes of the

*New York Times, March 31 and April 21, 1954.

Coffey: American people. Something I believed. I always felt that if there was any violence it would come from stopping social progress, witnessing the social upheavals of the thirties when people who tried to organize unions had their heads blown off or were tarred and feathered or knocked around. So, I never felt that the Communist party was the revolutionary party. The counterrevolution would be the violent--

But anyway, I left off going to meetings. And that was about it. So, that's an accurate quote. See, I went public with it. I did something that very few people in this country did. I just went public. I said, "Here I am. People have a right to be whatever they want to be and change their opinions." It cost me. It cost me.

Morris: That was what I was going to ask. In California, in politics, in the--?

Coffey: It cost me. It cost me. It cost me. It cost me business. It cost me a lot of things. A lot of people shy away from me. I had a wife and a couple of kids.

People would come to my house to retain me to do some things for them, and I did six or eight hours a month there. Then I went out in the truck doing some marketing for the Bob Ostrow Company, and then Bob committed suicide. You know, little jobs. I had a father who would loan me a few bucks and, incidentally, owned this property and lived here, who, when he came to the country and after he settled here, was the treasurer of the Socialist party in his neighborhood in Brooklyn, like most intelligent young immigrants were. They made him treasurer because he obviously was the only one working in the crowd. [laughter] The others read books. Yes, he was a businessman. So I started reading books as a kid because of him, I guess. And so my kids read books because of me.

But anyway, I just went public and I survived it. It's very rare.

Chairman, Democratic State Central Committee, 1978, and the State Surplus Issue

Coffey: During the time I was running for state chairman I was waiting for my opponents to bring it out.

Morris: Right. I didn't see a word.

Coffey: Well, let me tell you. The press did afterwards, and I expected that--Richard Bergholz, of the L.A. Times, who--and I hate to say this for posterity--would write an unfavorable story about his mother if he felt it was news. I just decided that it was no longer that I was going to spend my life hidden from major responsibilities because at one time or another I belonged to the Communist movement in this country. I was now old, or in a mature period of my life. I'd been northern chairman because people asked me to be, and the very people who asked me knew about my history. Joe Holsinger knew about my history, all these people, and didn't raise any questions. They needed me. I went out, put money in, raised it, did a successful job.

Some people thought I should run for state chairman, as opposed to Fred Furth. Fred Furth is a liberal man, but he had people working for him that started talking about my associations. Some of my friends around me in the party, young women and others who work for me, were a little disturbed by it because they remember the McCarthy period, but they didn't know that history.

Morris: And the loyalty oath is--?

Coffey: Yes. It didn't mean anything to them, you see. I would say to them--I said, "Yeah--" They said, "Well, if he does that, we'll get him." I said, "Well, don't be so sure." But anyway, it got around a little, but it never became a factor because I think they were worried about how to use it. They were really worried about how to use it. I won't give them credit one way or another, intellectually or what have you, for using it or not using it. There was a dropping of it.

It was after I was elected state chairman, when Bergholz broke the story and other papers picked it up. [I was not trying to minimize it; I just figured it it comes, it comes. BC 3/31/80]

Morris: I don't recall it in the San Francisco papers.

Coffey: Oh yes, the Chronicle--Jerry Burns did a very good story. I had my picture, wearing a lumber jacket, and I came down and talked to them. It was in Sacramento papers, all over. Basically, it was my story, you know. Some guys tried to hit me, but I said it my way. You know? It's out and was done.

At a press conference in Sacramento, Leo [McCarthy] and Paul Priolo were asked about the significance of my revelation and what that would mean in the '78 elections. And, of course, McCarthy said, "Well, I don't see what anybody's associations about forty years ago has to do with anything." And Paul Priolo, the Republican leader, agreed. So, if anybody wants to use it, that's up to them.

Coffey: It came up when I attacked Howard Jarvis at the Sacramento press conference--I knew what I was doing. I knew it was risky. I knew maybe in all wisdom I shouldn't do it, that somebody ought to do it, but nobody was doing it, and that was to say who really Howard Jarvis is. And I said it, two days in a row. [That Jarvis should be judged by his other career and that he was a hater of government, concerned with benefits for the biggest guy. You can understand him in the context of his work for apartment house owners, in favor of himself, not the overburdened taxpayer. And that he represented the current form of anarchism, not bomb-throwing, but doing violence to our present way of doing things. Remember that Jarvis is a frustrated candidate himself. BC 3/31/80]

Up there I had a very grueling experience. I was a very sick lad that night. I went alone. I got out of my car and I was exhausted and frustrated and tired and said, "My God, if these people don't understand this, what is this country coming to?" And I've got some fears about what this country's coming to.

One guy said to me--I think he was a young fellow from the Sacramento Bee whom I know. His name just--it'll come back to me. I think his question was, "Well, I mean, look, Bert, you're talking about a right-winger and his associations with this anti-Semitic paper which his stuff was in. Can't that open the charge about your past associations?"

See, I knew it was going to come. I looked at him. I said, "If you want to talk about one current right-wing kook, as opposed to a left-wing freak thirty-odd years ago, that's fine with me. I'm open and on the record on that subject. What else do you want to talk about?" I did it. I just did it. What are they going to do with it?

Morris: I'm interested that you say you thought it ought to be said and nobody was going to do it. Do you recall that--

Coffey: I think it was a decision by Winner--[Winner-Wagner, who were running the campaign against Proposition 13.* They were scared off doing anything with my attacking Jarvis because of some

*California constitutional amendment which radically lowered property taxes. Approved by voters, June 1978.

- Coffey: anti-Semitic situation in New York. I was supposed to do a debate on CBS in L.A. with Jarvis, but Winner said no and I wouldn't override a campaign decision. BC 3/31/80] I'm interrupting you, not to be rude, but I didn't want to forget because I knew exactly what you were coming to. A young man named Ron Javers, new to the Chronicle, who was just kissing Howard Jarvis's rear in stories, with no knowledge of California history, came up to me after the press conference in the city [San Francisco] when I kicked this thing off. He said, "Now, how did you happen to bring this up at this time because--"
- [doorbell rings; tape off]
- Coffey: I'm enjoying talking to you. It makes me think. Tomorrow I go in for some medical tests, and I'm in kind of rough shape.
- Morris: What I wanted to do was go back to the Helen Gahagan Douglas campaign.
- Coffey: But where were we?
- Morris: You'd been saying that you thought somebody should say the things that you said about Howard Jarvis but nobody was willing to say.
- Coffey: Yes, I thought--oh, now I've got it. Javers or whatever his name was from the Chronicle, this young fellow, charged me with being part of a Chuck Winner program to personally attack Jarvis in the campaign. I looked at him. I said, "I have no such knowledge of Chuck Winner saying that."

He said, "Well, I did a story on that once."

I said, "I've been out of town. I didn't read your story and I could care less what you think. The point I'm trying to make to you is I have no relationship with Chuck Winner on what I'm saying or doing." That was a true statement. But he repeated that anyway. What I found out later was that Chuck denied saying it. But on the other hand I do believe that he must have said it because--. At the early stage of the campaign it was stupid to signal Jarvis that he would attack him, but on the other hand, knowing the business, obviously he was very vulnerable. Jack Anderson is attacking Jarvis currently as a hustler. He's a guy that's used committees to raise money.

My attack on him was to say--and this is how I handled it--was that you can't judge an initiative without knowing who wrote it, what its purpose was, where they come from, what they're for, who they are, and what their objectives are. They quoted me as using that strange word, that I thought it was terribly fair to raise that issue. But the campaign obviously didn't raise the issue.

Coffey: I was traveling with Dick O'Neill, and Leo McCarthy spoke to O'Neill and said, "God, is Bert going to continue to talk about that?"

Dick said, "I think not." The reports I got from some people were that the reaction to my attack, as reported, was not favorably looked upon, including some liberals, who don't know what side is up anyway. They wouldn't know fascism if it snuck up and hit them over the head.

So I just figured that I had done my thing. It was out there laying there, statewide, two conferences in major media markets, if I may use that phrase, and if anybody wanted to talk about it, there I was. But the press didn't want to pursue it. I challenged the press. I said, "Where are you Woodward and Bernsteins? Where is your interest in this initiative? You write stories about this guy like he's some folk hero. He's nothing but a mean, miserable bum." I continued to say it, and I will continue to say it.

I get called about Jerry [Brown] running up and down the state with him or Alan [Cranston] doing so and so. I say, "They're elected officeholders. I just have to tell you that I understand what they're doing in talking and doing business with him, but I don't have to. He's nothing more than a mean, miserable man who's going to leave a heritage to this state that we're going to long remember and suffer from."

I will say two years from now I'm going to look for those people if I'm still on earth to find out who voted for [Proposition] 13. We are just getting by in the greatest shuck and jive story of history. We have the incredible situation in this state of having a finance director named Roy Bell, and some others who work in Finance, not being able to advise the legislature accurately of what the hell their surplus was. If they were properly advised, they might have had Proposition 8 written with enough financing to beat the Jarvis-Gann measure.

Then we are told now we have a trigger towards next year. What we're going to have is fellows like Ken Cory and others proposing legislation for tax relief on income. We're going to reduce the possibility of state and communities to raise money. We have unmet needs, and where are we going to be? We're going to be in a totally pay-as-you-go society, and only those who can afford to pay will go, and who will they be? So you're going to have a whole reordering or reshuffling of society if this thing continues in its path, and I think it's dangerous. I think it's dangerous. So that's where I'm at, and I am resentful of the fact that I was lied to. I am like the people. I knew we had that kind

Coffey: of surplus, but I didn't know we were going to have one next year. We might have a substantial one next year, depending upon other economic conditions, which can be very strange. But enough of that.

George Miller, Jr.'s Election to Assembly (1946), Independence,
and State Party Chairmanship

Morris: We haven't gotten you and George Miller, Jr., into politics.

Coffey: Let's you and I get back to that.

Morris: You were running your direct-mail advertising business.

Coffey: I quit the oil workers before their collective bargaining election. They didn't really need me. They were going to win it. I had done all my things, and I didn't want to go on south. George had to make up his mind whether to run for the assembly against a ten-year incumbent [Harold F. Sawallisch], a Democrat, conservative who was tied in with the Samish organization and all that lobby. I had to make a decision of whether I was going to stay with the oil workers and travel, stay in Richmond, go back home where my father was living in New York, etc., you know.

So, I made a decision by withdrawing from the organization. [tape off] George and I in May of that year, of 1946, where he entered the primary--the primary, I think, was late summer in those days--and we both went at it. We defeated this incumbent, ten years in office with all the money, by 660 votes in a county-wide election.

Morris: Very good for your first time out.

Coffey: In other words, we had to run from Richmond, El Cerrito to Alamo, Danville. It was a total, county-wide assembly district. We traveled the byways and the highways, before the freeways, of this county, where this crazy young man and myself took on the world, and we beat them. There were only two Democrats elected to the assembly that year, 1946.

Morris: That was the year that Warren won the governorship in the primary.

Coffey: Right. We won our seat. We beat a Republican by two thousand votes, and another guy down south won. When George went up to the assembly we were a minority party. When he went to the senate we

Coffey: were in a minority party. He began with a very, very auspicious record doing some very, very interesting things, and later on began to specialize, became very deeply involved with education, finance, had been chairman of the party, served a term during the Stevenson thing. Stevenson had asked him to assume it. Prior to that he was defeated for state chairman by what I described to you very early on this afternoon, that is the [William] Malone organization, who never really wanted him to run. They drove by here one day when my father was still living here and got me to drive out to George's place to get him not to run for state chairman--very subtle way.

Morris: Really?

Coffey: [Malone was not a candidate for chairman himself then, but he is a guy who takes care of himself and his friends. He was worried about guys like Miller not wanting the Democratic party to be the way he thought it should. George used to say about the party then that you need a passport to get in. That influenced me later. BC 3/31/80] They always knew they couldn't run George or couldn't own him. So in a very nice way they were thinking about, "Well, it isn't the best idea for a state senator to be chairman. He hasn't got the time and this and that."

George would say, "Well, if Bert has the time, I have the time because he'll run it for me." So, I had to leave what I was doing. [In the pre-convention and post-convention period I was in the central committee office as George's aide. BC 3/31/80]

Morris: That was what I was going to ask. Did you stay on his staff?

Coffey: When we saw Stevenson--I never was on his staff. That's a really interesting thing. I never worked for the state. I never had anything, but we had a personal business relationship in that period that I told you about in '46. That lasted to '49 when he was elected to the senate and was flat broke. We tossed and divided equipment. He kept some equipment, and I moved around the corner and opened my business, and he went into insurance. It was a terrible decision for him to make because he was suffering the pangs of a young family man without any visible means of support; there was nothing else except to go into business. The legislature was paying \$100 a month, and he was in debt, and he hated it. He just hated it. He had a lot of pride and a lot of good taste too.

Let's see, when we got into that that was '49. So, I went into my own business and he went into his. But I never was on the staff until you can talk about when Stevenson asked him to run for the

Coffey: state chairman at the warehouse in Chicago after the convention. He said, "I don't have the time but if Bert can take off time and do it." I had done some of that. During the Kefauver campaign, I took off to support Kefauver.

Incidentally, I have Diane--that's Estes's daughter--working for us now. She's thirty years old and very, very charming.

Morris: Kefauver?

Coffey: Yes, the middle daughter. The three daughters live out here. None of them have married, all very attractive and very interesting women. I know Diane very well. She works for us.

Morris: So most of your political experience has been as a volunteer?

Coffey: Well, no. It wasn't all volunteer. I got into these various campaigns, and I was kind of reckless about whether there was money or not, but then when I was in business I did some professional campaigns. Yes, so I've been involved at all levels, volunteer, professional, etc. I try to keep my mind attuned to current developments in campaigns and techniques, like media and radio, television, so I understand the computer. I used computer letters when they first came out. I'm not a technician, but I'm aware of what can be done.

But anyway, George was elected state chairman and I took off and we had our babies at the time. I was living in El Cerrito and that was '52. Fifty-two from now is how many years?

Morris: Twenty-six.

Coffey: Yes, well, Vicki was born. So I took it over until after the Stevenson debacle. Then I called George and I said, "Now it's time to give your friend Don Bradley a job. I want to go back to--" My thing was, "I don't want to be a party hack." It was an expression I used. I'll never forget it. "I don't want to be a hack. To work up here, to raise my own money, to do all this would be to be a party hack."

So I took an account with the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. I did a paper for them for thirteen or eleven western states, while I had some other things to do. I was on my way, until I was HUACed, to being a very, you know, as the guys said, an up and coming young fellow in the Democratic party, a person some people saw as going back to Washington in the national committee, doing a lot of things. I was young and guys in their forties and fifties were saying these things about me. Of course, George was a very strong and powerful guy and there was that kind of relationship.

Coffey: You know, then I was pretty well hammered. I just stayed back and did my own thing here, and I didn't expose myself too strongly.

Morris: The fact that they wanted you to testify or were interested in you was enough to put the kibosh on contracts people might have given you?

Coffey: Oh, sure. Oh, yes, you withdrew in those days. I mean, Christ, nobody was going to touch you. George Miller's great line one night when we were driving together--we were driving together and he said, "I haven't seen enough of you lately, and I know you've been going through hell."

I said, "Well, you've been going through hell trying to make a living and being a legislator." He was. I said, "The next campaign's coming up. There we go again, and I'll be in all the papers as your buddy."

He said, "Listen, I'll wear you like a lavalier." It's a great line.

Morris: Great line.

Coffey: Yes, great line. He had that very strong feeling of pride about who he chooses to be with. He was criticized very severely later on for having close relationships with Al Shults, who became the major lobbyist for the oil industry. Al and he--Al grew up in Richmond. [chuckling] Al babysat young George when George and Dorothy went out. Al went to Korea, came back a captain, and Al went to a law firm, Pillsbury, Madison, and Sutro; he lived with George when George was a freshman legislator. Years later he becomes a major lobbyist. So the point of my story is people were criticizing him, even some of the people that you may have talked to in recent months. George said to them the same thing he said to me, [forcefully] "I'll pick my friends where I want, and I'll wear them all like a lavalier, and that includes Al Shults and Bert Coffey."

Morris: That's an interesting combination.

Coffey: Which really reveals the kind of guy he was, fiercely independent. When he had to give up any stroke of independence, he suffered from it. I knew it. It was things we wouldn't talk about, but if he had to give up some independence on any issue, his pride was damaged, his integrity, everything. So he had problems dealing with those things.

Morris: What about being a legislator from an area like Richmond where Standard Oil is a strong--?

Coffey: Like Contra Costa County.

Morris: Like Contra Costa County where Standard Oil is one of the major--?

Coffey: The oil companies were the major thing, and when his good friend Al became a major lobbyist, as he progressed, when somebody died and he went up, I shared those concerns with George because I was considered by Standard to still be a left-wing thorn in their side. We beat Standard. We publicly ran--that was my strategy--we ran against Standard Oil. We ran against PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric]. We ran against all these guys. We said, "This is where our opponent is getting support. These are the people that are not going to run us."

We beat them twice. We beat their assemblyman, who was a Republican, and after George was in office twelve months their personal senator got ready to move out because they saw us breathing down his neck. I went around saying, "Oh, yes, we're going to run for the state senate." Tony deLap moved out, didn't file. Then they ran a former Democratic national committeeman, Democratic state chairman, Clifford Anglim, from this district, who was then a PG&E lawyer. They filed him; they raised money for him.

He filed--in those days, crossfiled; this is a great story--in the Republican primary. We filed on the Republican side, as well as the Democratic side, and we filed in the Progressive party, the Wallace party. We won three nominations. We were a little lucky; some other people crossfiled too. So in the split of the votes George ran first in the Republican, first in the Democrat, and first in the Progressive party.

Then the late Bob Condon walked in, who was considered to be the left-wing member of the firm, who got later hit by the Atomic Energy Commission. They invited him and barred his admission as being a former associate of Communists, who then lost his congressional seat some years later, who was a brilliant, brilliant lawyer. So, Bob ran for the assembly [10th District] on the Progressive party too, and there was no question that Bob had more left support. So, we looked at the returns and George had a great quip as Bob walked in or sauntered in, as he did, with his hat up on the side and a cigarette dangling in his mouth. George said, "Well, I think this election will tell you who's the liberal in this crowd. I got two more votes than you did on the Progressive party." So, that's a great story.

Miller in the State Senate, 1949-1968: Issues, Style, and
Constituency

Coffey: We won that election (1948), and he became a state senator at the age of thirty. [DeLap figured he couldn't beat George. It was not my idea that he run for the senate; I didn't even think about it. It was George's idea. He'd gotten the attention of Earl Warren, who gave him the gas tax bill when deLap wouldn't carry it. George was independent of the oil companies, even though later on he said he wasn't. What he said was, "In law, a corporation is a fiction, but they're also constituents, and I give an ear to constituents." BC 3/31/80]

Morris: He became a very powerful member of the state senate.

Coffey: Within a few years. He played the rules. He became a very structured man, a man who intellectually had the qualities that were searching, that were irreverent; but in the senate he became a senate man, which happens. He learned the rules; he learned that's how to get things done.

After a few years in the senate he was asked to challenge Hugh Burns, who was very conservative, in many respects right-wing. But they had a strange relationship, and he would never challenge Hugh Burns, to the consternation of many friends. He would say, "It's not my turn." And it never became his turn. Then when a guy died who was Senate Finance [Committee] chairman--he would not challenge him--then he was elected Senate Finance chairman.

He always played the rules of progression of the house, which I didn't agree with. I didn't agree with. He could have beaten Burns. Maybe he could count better than some of his friends. Maybe he didn't think he could beat Burns. See, I don't know. I'll give him credit for the judgment of saying, "No, you don't do that," because what have you got if you win? A divided house. But he always was a threat, and he would debate Burns. On FEPC the Governor had to dump my friend Richard Richards, who was the author of the bill, and say, "George, I need you." Pat said, "George, I need you for this bill because you're the only guy that can really put this FEPC thing through." George did and had to defeat Hugh Burns on it.

He also had to fight Hugh Burns on water. George fought the Burns-Porter water act. George always was a [Sacramento River] Delta man; he was able to go into Los Angeles and tell them just what was going to happen. He was a prophet. He'd go into Los

Coffey: Angeles and say, "Don't look upon my interests in the water of the north as really just self-serving the north, but it's the kind of life you're going to have down here."

Morris: It's a different world up there?

Coffey: "The more you bring water in here the more you're running against history. Man follows water, not water following man. You're going to develop; you're going to develop; you're going to develop; it's going to be costly. You're going to bring millions of people, and you're going to have the distaste of crowds." He didn't use the word "pollution," but before he died he did. He was able to go down to Town Hall, which is like our Commonwealth Club, and give them a very erudite lecture on water and have them listen.

He and I campaigned against Pat's water plan with the AF of L. We spent \$20,000; they spent millions. We almost beat them. Because obviously--the point in the argument that reached the people was the extraordinary amount of money they would have to spend to implement the Burns-Porter Act. You've been so close to this that you'll have to refresh my memory.

But we barely lost that. There was a break between the Governor and us on these issues. But yet the Governor, down at the end, you know, has said that George was probably the most brilliant legislator. I don't know whether he says it for history, but he's said this around--the most effective. George went down to L.A. to see Pat in Los Angeles after the '66 election, and they spent two hours hugging each other before he left.

But George was a very vigorous critic. Because he was a man of the house; he was a man of the senate, and the executive should do its own thing. The senate should propose, you know, the executive execute. He was very structured. He came, through his experience, from the irreverent young turk to a balance, in the state senate, where he was able to give leadership to the turks. Even toward the end when the turks were coming in from the assembly, Jesse Unruh's turks, all of them were in there two days and wanted to know what important committees they can get, which would shock George, who would say, "Well, why don't you go sit on your ass and learn."

That had to do with Tony Beilenson, who's now in Congress, and others. George debated Beilenson on abortion--George was a gallant warrior, except when he debated Unruh. Unruh didn't play by the rules; he'd come into the senate to lobby for his position from the assembly.

Coffey: [And George wasn't vindictive; he said Beilenson was a bright boy after he won the abortion bill, even though he was against it. He and I had a lot of arguments on that. Jack Knox had introduced an abortion bill his first term and lost, and then Beilenson picked it up.

[Funny story about that. We were all sitting around in Don Cleary's room at the Senator Hotel--he was the legislative representative for San Francisco--and one of them was a Catholic bishop. Jack was very low-key, talking about his abortion bill, and George said, "Have you met Bishop So-and-so?"

[Jack said, "No." "You will!" says George.

[The arguments on abortion were very different from what you hear today.

[He thought Jesse Unruh was a good legislator, but he didn't like his style. He looked with trepidation on Jesse's ideas on staff; said it was building a costly structure with no end in sight and would take legislators away from the people. He thought those newsletters were costly and self-serving and the press should cover what was newsworthy. What he used to do was sit in his shirtsleeves in his district office on weekends and people would come and talk to him. He liked people.

[After an election, there'd be checks in his socks, little checks for the campaign, and he'd say, "Send 'em back!"

[George never wanted to run the state. He was a highly sensitive, independent man, with a good grasp of issues. He prophesied the BART mess; he was for rapid transit, but said the price was too much. Privately, he was against Pat's highway program; he said they always wanted more and early was aware of the environmental problems. BC 3/31/80]

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Coffey: If you want to know about George Miller, you should talk to John Knox--he's great on Miller stories, just great, Jack Knox. He had such an incredible memory for stories. The humor, the things he [George] would say. It was hard. I had a guy trying to copy them down for nine months, was working for him. I would say, "When you sit around, write down--" You couldn't write down what George said. It wasn't that good on paper, but when you heard it--everybody would stop talking in the senate. They'd all be talking and you'd sit there and suddenly there'd be a silence;

Coffey: legislators who were out in the audience in the old building would say, "Shh, I got to hear what he has to say." When George took the floor, they all listened. They all listened.

Morris: Was it a natural ability to make speeches or did it develop?

Coffey: It developed. He developed a style. As I tell you, he had that ability to act in him. He had the ham in him. He had a passion. He had that Irish romanticism and wit that were just incredible. He'd have a twinkle in his eye; he'd have a snarl; he could corner his mouth and talk like he was out of Mission Street, you know. He could do anything. Then he developed his gravel-voice toughness, and everybody just listened. He commanded attention. When he walked into a room, people always wanted to touch him, always be around him. He'd come to a meeting an hour late, everybody angry because he's late, and he'd walk in and as soon as he'd walk in he'd twinkle, he'd smile, and he'd look around and say, "Well, I guess I'm a little late." And they'd smile and applaud.

I walked with him one day to his office. He had a hangover; his psoriasis was just killing him. Nobody knew where he was staying, but I knew. He was at the Senate Hotel sleeping. I got him up and he got dressed and I saw that terrible skin. We start walking over to his office. It took twenty minutes to get out of this damned hotel because everybody wanted to talk legislation. Then we walked across the grounds and into his office. As he walked into his office to greet his secretary, there was a room full of people, like a current doctor's office, all waiting to see George.

He walked into his office and sat down and I walked in with him. In about twenty minutes he had to go to the floor, so he walked out of another doorway and then walked around the hall. I followed him. He went back into the front where the people were waiting and he looked around with that great twinkle and said, "Well, folks, the Senator ain't gonna be here today. Isn't that too bad?" and ran, and ran down to the floor. But they all loved him. They didn't get mad. He just had that something about him.

Even these years after his death, you pick up a story by Ed Salzman, like one which is on my desk downstairs, saying the senate would not have been in a mess, the state would not have had this tax problem, if there had been a strong leader in the senate like George Miller, and then saying, maybe out of this will rise another George Miller. That was Ed Salzman, whom George was very tough on. He used to say, "Hey, kid, why don't you go run for an office if that's the kind of crap you want to write. Go run for office; that's what you really want to be. If you want to be a senator, go run for it like we do. Don't feed me this stuff when I tell you something off the record." But nevertheless Ed writes that kind of thing to this day.

Coffey: The only obituary that I thought made any sense was a small one by Lou Cannon. It said, in response to your earlier question, "How could you be a senator from Contra Costa County and not be in the--" (You didn't say that, but) "and not be in the pocket of the oil industry?" Well, George, having beaten them twice, said to me, "Bert, when a guy gets a little friendly with you, don't take it too seriously. They'll always hate us. We beat them. That's why they like us. That's why they want to play golf with me. It's because I beat them. They'll never really love us."

So when Al Shults became the lobbyist for major oil it presented a problem. Shults's story--and I believe it--is that nine out of ten times he refrained from talking to George about major legislation because he didn't want to have that kind of relationship spoil his relationship and he would have somebody else on his staff talk to him. It was just kind of touchy.

So, as he went along, he did begin to help. Down through the years, he'd give some votes to the industry. But the industry was also interested in other things, like your attitude on labor and other issues. They never dared speak to him about any issue other than that.

Morris: About oil?

Coffey: Anything other than oil. I mean labor--don't forget all these industries in those times, they had their anti-labor bias, anything that cost them money, social programs.

They never touched George. George used to say in an amused way, "You know, they can't really accept the fact, these guys, that I'm really pro-labor and liberal with my philosophy." They say, "Well, that's Miller voting his district." He said, "Have they looked at the district lately?"

Or, you know, telling Jack Knox to be very careful about the Rumford Act--"you're vulnerable, kid; let me do the speeches"--and he supported fair housing. And then Jack, of course, doing the same thing, all of us. But that's the kind of gutsy guy he was. He'd protect his friends, try to protect them.

So he did give the industries of Contra Costa County a hand. He treated them as a constituent, and if he felt they were right he voted--. There was only one bill I think he voted on that I didn't like. We kidded him about it and he kind of scratched his head about it. That was an oil bill. But Lou Cannon said in George's obituary that very signal about George's career were two issues before he died. One was the oil industry opposed a certain measure, and he voted against the oil industry and beat them on it.

[doorbell rings; tape off briefly]

Coffey: Cannon pointed out that George beat oil and beat Reagan on two very important measures. One had to do with this subject today. It had to do with the rebate of tax. Reagan wanted to give it to the board of supervisors, and they had a bitter strife. They almost came to blows. It wasn't very public. Reagan accused George of something, and George heard it and almost went after him, and then Reagan went out of the room to his private office and came back later and apologized. He made a mistake because he lost a fight. George beat him.

George said, "Send the money directly to the taxpayers. If you give it to the board of supervisors, they'll find some way of spending it without it getting down to the people." But George thought it was phony. George thought that it wasn't even as strong as one aspirin, that it was setting a dangerous precedent, that we are not the most highly taxed people in the world, that there are other nations that are higher taxed than we are, that by us bleeding and screaming and running for election on the basis of our taxes and how we're going to do things about taxes we are going to pave the road to our own destruction in this state. And he's been right.

III GOVERNORS PAT AND JERRY BROWN

Opposition to Pat Brown

Coffey: He was right about BART. He and I did not vote for BART. We both believed in rapid transit, wanted rapid transit, but felt it did not have a strong enough economic base. Again he broke with Brown on that. Brown begged, pleaded, and twisted the arm of the late Joe Silva of Brentwood to get it. [He was a judge. He was appointed to a joint committee on rapid transit and had a decisive vote. BC 3/31/80] It was a three-county thing instead of five or seven. George said, "It has no economic base."

He also said years before he died that you're going to have to raise the prices on the bridge, because you've got to make it uneconomical for people to use their cars. Otherwise they'll never get out of their cars. This is before we found what the pollutants were doing to us, what that traffic was. He felt it was uneconomic to build more bridges, but yet he built the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, but got it built at a time when prices were low and got it built under cost--he and Jack McCarthy--which they called an ugly bridge but they got the bridge built early. He agreed to that one because of the Redwood Empire and what his projection of what was--

Morris: To take people up there?

Coffey: Well, you take people off the city, from the Bay Bridge, and put through the trucks on this bridge and people. He knew for years it wasn't going to pay for itself, but you go over there now and you see this tremendous traffic of trucks going up to the Redwood Empire.

He opposed the water plan.

Morris: You said the AFL was with him on that.

Coffey: The AFL-CIO at that time, yes, opposed the water plan, an historic position.

Morris: On what grounds? It would make all those neat jobs.

Coffey: It was much different in that day from today, when, as some people say, "Some people don't care; they'd build a concentration camp if it meant jobs." That's a very strong statement and I know you grimace, but that's been some of the environmentalists' reaction to building trades. People, in other words, build über alles, always build, build, build, not judging whether you need to or not.

I don't remember the details of the campaign, but it was some historic, philosophical view about water and its traditions, etc. in the state that I really can't help you on.

Morris: There were also questions about the cost, that Brown was not giving the right costs and that it was going to cost more than--

Coffey: See, my problem is you have been reading. I can never remember a campaign three months after it's over. But I know we were in that one. I was just helping him, free, you know, as a kid. He was out making speeches, and I'm sitting down in my office doing a few things.

Morris: Tell me, was there any truth to the feeling that Miller's leadership in the senate and Unruh's in the assembly limited Pat Brown's effectiveness as governor?

Coffey: Unruh's did. Unruh's did. There's no question about it. Unruh was impatient; Unruh wanted to be governor. George only wanted to be governor if it meant stopping Unruh. That, really--before he died he said, "If that Jess is running, I don't want to do that to the state; I'll run." We talked. We had this meeting before he died. He pointed out he hadn't had any heart problem in five years. The last time he used the pills was when Jack McCarthy in a boat fishing up in Canada had an attack, and George shoved them down his mouth. And Jack's still alive.

Then he had that massive--I think he was going--Don Bradley wished him a happy New Year. He always got together--except one year with me--he got together with Don, a good Irishman, on New Years. He had a glass of champagne with Dorothy and keeled over at one o'clock, massive cerebral. But that was the way for him to go. No way.

Coffey: But he had felt that he would, stubbornly in his own way, would campaign like once a week. He would not give up his legislative duties but would travel, and if we would do what we call "right advance," make an important statement some place and then after ten or eleven months see if there's any viability, if there's any motion, movement towards a candidacy. If he had lived, there would have been a primary between Unruh and himself. As sure as I'm sitting here, I know there would be.

The reason Pat ran a third time was to stop Unruh. Pat was urged by his friends to run. There was no reason for Pat to run for a third term. He was young, but why run? You're going to get your head knocked off.

Morris: You think a third term for a governor is not a likely possibility?

Coffey: I don't think in the recent decades that you can really hang on to an administrative or executive job on a long-term basis. I'm even questioning whether you can manage it. I'm questioning whether you can be president of the United States for one term.

Problems with the Press

Coffey: I find it--I'm very serious. This is not to say that our president and his people are not making serious errors, but if you read the press and listen to the press, as I do and I'm sure you do, you find a whole difference of approach. You can't do anything right. It's just--that isn't news. There's a little side bar in every story.

For example, [Joseph] Califano releasing the story about women, cigarettes, pregnancy, children, death. The next day Carter's office had an announcement that the average person wouldn't see but then the radio picks up: he's going to North Carolina to visit a tobacco warehouse. You know, you couldn't plan things worse than that.

What's the news? You know, they're digging. They're digging. That's why I'm critical of the press in terms of the whole Jarvis episode--paint it big! It's very relevant to the campaign to carry on the fact that you're running against a bunch of shysters and tricksters and right-wing freaks who have certain motives and you want to give them power. I think the papers failed.

Coffey: But what they're doing now to public parties is destroying them. They're destroying them. [J. William] Fulbright did an article about a year and a half ago in the Columbia Review which--I don't get time to read any more--which I thought was awfully good, about what he felt was going to happen to the country as a result of this lack of responsibility on the press, yet fearful of first amendment rights, as we all are. You can't stop it, but on the other hand I'm fearful of it, and I don't know the answer.

I've watched these reporters up and down the state for major papers, their ego needs, the trips they're on. It's very destructive. It would be good if there were some positive results from these things, but they're turning people more and more off politics. They've created the anti-government thing, as well as our own political leaders. You can't run against government, be elected, and expect government to be healthier. People expect more; their frustrations are greater. And the press has a holiday with it.

Morris: Was this already a factor, do you think, when Pat was governor?

Coffey: No. When Pat was governor I don't think it was that much of a factor then. Obviously, the hard news is Unruh taking on the Governor or--. We made the front page of the Chronicle one day when Jack Knox accused the Governor of hypocrisy in vetoing one of his bills. Jack was a friend but never close to the Governor; different styles, much closer to Jerry than to Pat--but was very upset. The veto had to do with some bill that had to do with some economic judgment that was more conservative than probably Pat--but that Jack felt was a free-enterprise gesture and he had to do a little, nurture all the way through both houses, and Pat vetoed it. So he asked me to write a release and, of course, it made the front page and Pat was very upset with us.

I said, "Well, Pat, that's the way it goes. Some day you have a friend and some day you don't."

Morris: In politics you're comfortable working with somebody who's going to need a press release attacking the governor and then later on work with the governor?

Coffey: I was comfortable because I find that one in life has to have some loyalties. My friend was very upset. We had broken our back for him, and we never asked very much from the Governor, appointments or otherwise, and by God, this was Jack's bill, sign the goddamned bill. I feel that way about any governor, for the friend, unless it's an anti-social bill. So Jack was very upset. I don't know.

Coffey: I was mad too for some reason, so we wrote a story and we made the papers. The next time Pat thought twice about vetoing a bill of Jack's, right? It's part of the leverage. That's business. You're not--I'm not mad at Pat.

Personal Loyalties

Coffey: I have personal reasons to be mad at a lot of people. George Miller, Jack Knox stood with me when times were low. There's some other people you could talk about: "Well, Bert, when you leave my office, you know, I've got to think of my own family and myself and I don't know how much I can do for you. I'll make a call." I mean I--. That's another phase of life. So I developed certain loyalties to friends and it kind of stayed. If George [Miller III] called tomorrow and he needs something, he knows where I'm at. We've agreed to that.

Talking about young George's life, he's a sterling legislator, got fantastic judgment, works hard, is not ambitious for larger electoral office. He's going to be a man of the Congress as his father was a man of the senate. He's going to move in it. I, politically, am trying to let his people do their thing, his staff, develop his staff. I'm not going to be around forever. I'm going to get older, tired. One doesn't know how long that is.

I don't want him to face the thing that Jack Knox said one day. Because we had such a close relationship--not in legislation, not in their lives, but in politics. He said this about two years ago when he was running in a primary. He had no taste for some guy attacking him in the primary; that's the easiest thing. The cheapest shot in the world in politics is to run against a member of your own party. Jesus, he's not easy to beat, but you've got a record and you can be selective and shoot at that record, that part of it you don't like. He said, "You know, if you weren't around, Bert, I don't even think I'd run, and I don't know what's going to happen when you're not." He said this sitting over lunch, just two guys, and I'm not giving the exact language, but I kind of did a double take.

I said, "Come on, Jack, you can hire guys like me. The only difference is instead of the modest sums we spend, you'd have to spend \$5,000 to get some jerk running your campaign while you're up there fooling around with legislation."

"Aah, it wouldn't be the same."

Coffey: So I get that feeling later about George, and I think George quietly understands that. He's developed some good people. We've turned some people over, but--. But when it comes to politics of the district, then we talk.

The only staff I've ever been on was George's. I went on that staff on a part-time basis because it was suggested by some friends of his a month after he was elected, and we had met and studied and analyzed who should be on the staff. When he came back he said, "I think you ought to be, because you're a bridge to a part of this community I'll never be related to and that's people that knew my father. Also, your judgment and having some wise head around. What have I got? People of my generation and younger. Yet, I'm 'Georgie,' George's kid, and I really don't know them. Remember, I was away at school."

Morris: Even though he's got the name and even though he's George's kid, he doesn't feel like--?

Coffey: He said, "I don't really know these people." Very interesting, with an i.d. that's probably one of the highest in the district at that time. The polls showed us that.

A Study in Contrasts

Morris: Are you the same kind of a bridge between Pat and Jerry?

Coffey: No, because Jerry has never given it any opportunity. I don't think anybody is a bridge. The difference in my rank--I don't know the word--or occupancy of the state chair is when Roger [Kent] was chairman he had a governor who was dealing through Roger. Nobody deals through me. I am never called about an appointment. I keep the facade up to protect Jerry and the party for the record, but Jerry doesn't call me. Jerry called me the day he announced his candidacy, and I almost fainted.

Morris: To tell you he was announcing.

Coffey: Yes, he said, [raising his voice] "See, I told you I'm going to work with the party, Bert. I'm going to announce."

I said, "Well, let me just respond, Jerry. The polls might indicate you're below 54 percent, and I've always said when a governor is below a certain number he'll call the party. You better start stroking it, kid." I said, "Gray Davis--I'm going to make him come to some of our meetings." And I did. Jerry has come to a meeting.

Coffey: I might say Jerry has not given me any help, but he hasn't hurt me. There are those who say Jerry could be of great help to me--me symbolically, the medium to the party. But that's not where he's at. He doesn't understand it; he doesn't quite trust it; the people around him don't understand it. But now they understand it. Now the word is, "Bert's doing a good job." Every time Jerry sees me he says, like Saturday night, "How are you, Bert?"--which is fantastic; he asks how you are.

I said, "Okay."

He said, "Keep up the good work." Then I begin to say something, start talking to [Mervyn] Dymally. I was sitting between Merv and his father.

I know Jerry's doing well right now. Private polls indicate that he's moving, and healthy. The guy walks, as his father said, in manure.

Anyway, no, I don't have that kind of relationship. Whereas [when] Bradley was the executive director, Roger was the chairman, they had the special elections, they had the governor to raise money, they used the governor, the governor used them, and that was smart.

Pat said to me after his operation, a year ago--he kind of complained about a prostate operation and having the radio and press saying that's what it was and without the women knowing what the new techniques were, so it really didn't disturb his virility. He's so beautiful, you know. [laughter] It's just a great story. We're walking down the street, and he's telling people about his operation.

But anyway, he at lunch said, "Do you talk to Jerry?" I changed the subject. He said, "Don't you talk to him?"

I said, "About what? Zen?" I said, "I don't know Jacques [Barzaghi]. I only talk to people I have to talk to."

He said, "But damn it, Bert, when I was governor--. Of course, it got me in trouble too, you know. There's always the other side. But I always called on Roger and Don to do things because they knew where the action was. They knew what was happening out there. I daresay you know where he should be going around this state."

Coffey: I said, "I could be helpful." But I had no antagonistic position with Jerry. Jerry literally has been quoted--not in my presence--when someone said, "I am running for state chairman next time, Jerry," [as saying], "Well, what's wrong with Bert? He's doing a good job."

[The person would say,] "Don't you understand, Jerry? It's been explained to you that it's a two-year term."

"Oh. Let me check it out."

Or he introduces me to people, let's say when we're standing together, to Richard Reeves, and he says, "Richard, do you know Bert Coffey? He's about to say yes and Jerry says, "He's the president of our party."

I said, "Jerry, I keep telling you I'm not the president of the party. I'm the chairman."

Reeves said, "Well, you see, he's got president on his mind." So we always go through this kind of thing. It's very strange. But he doesn't have that orientation. Yet he should learn--and I thought that through the presidential [campaign], when he learned how to use eastern machines, like in Maryland or other states where there's a party, he would understand how to use it better in this state. He is not popular in the party. It is embarrassing to me to sit at a table, Saturday night, and to have Pat get a standing ovation for three minutes, just mention his name, when everybody thought he was, when he was through and he was a blunderer, a malaprop, and could never do anything right; you know, no affection. All of a sudden now because of time he's a statesman; he's the Truman. But an ovation.

Then Jerry walks in--nothing. Jerry walks down behind. Pat says, "Where are you going?" He says, "I'll be right back, Pop. I'll be right back."

Then he sits down. I give him my chair, so he sits down and talks to Pat. Pat says, "How are things going?"

"Everything's fine. Everything's fine. It's going good."

But he then stands up, doesn't say anything very significant, wasn't particularly funny. There are times when he could be funny, and it's only when he's bridged into an introduction. Like when I introduce him he's terribly funny because I insult him. I do a [Don] Rickles on him, tell stories, say something nice, then rib

Coffey: him, about patronage and things like that. He comes back and [snapping fingers] a quip, very bright, much brighter than people give him credit for. So he got polite applause. Everybody got bigger applause than he did.

Yet the people--keep in mind what I said a year and a half ago to some public affairs groups and vice-presidents of companies, about how I always kidded Brown. It was always good to get an audience warmed up. I'd walk in and I would say, "I'm delighted that you have given me about eighteen minutes to talk to you today." Then I'd reach in my pocket, take out a blank sheet of paper, and I'd say, "But, you know, I don't really need eighteen minutes. I just need a minute and a half to talk to you about the Governor's program." And they'd laugh.

Thoughts on 1978 Campaigns in Progress

Coffey: But seriously, I would point out that he has violated all political tradition. The coalition that elects Democrats had broken up. All he's got left are the people. And then they'd understand what I'm saying.

Labor was mad; business is mad; everybody was mad; then he's sunk. During the primary they could not turn it around. They spent a fortune. The question of history is going to be, "Did Gray Davis blow \$1 million in that primary, or didn't he, by running against a shadow?" And he worked terribly hard. They couldn't turn those polls around. It reached that "V" where it's supposed to shoot up, and then it just leveled off. But he did get, what, 78 percent in the primary vote, and the press thought that was poor because Pat got 85 percent in one of his reelection campaigns. I said, "Well, it reflects the times." I thought that considering Jerry Brown's status during the primary he did pretty well. I did. I did say--I was scared. I thought he was going to get about 68 [percent] because there were polls saying he was doing about 62 to 68 percent.

Now he's running well because [pause] he's an opportunist, because he still has some base with people, although his presidential campaign changed that. He was now no longer a citizen; he was a politician. Now he's moving up because he was able to move into Jarvis-Gann and take it away and be visible with [Howard] Jarvis, have Jarvis say nice things about him, because Jarvis doesn't really like [Evelle] Younger. The campaign is going to be very, very bitter. Younger is attacking bitterly right now on

Coffey: radio and Jerry starts today on radio, attacking Younger. So it's going to be a tough campaign, and I will, I daresay, make a few comments during the campaign to hit Younger or [Mike] Curb. It's going to be that kind of race. It's starting in August being very--the people aren't paying any attention, but it's coming into the ears, from radio.

Morris: From where you sit.

Coffey: From radio. It's heavy! One hundred fifty thousand dollars on Younger's part in the last couple weeks.

Morris: None of this comes through the Democratic party?

Coffey: No, no. I mean you'd have to have a whole different briefing on party. Party is just what I told you it is. It's what's created by law, what I'm doing about it to change it around. Some people fear that. [Leo] McCarthy didn't. He sees it. He sees that every decade we're going to have to broaden it out. We're behind other parties in the country.

But a governor could strengthen the party by attention to it, by saying, "Why don't you speak to Bert about that post? Why don't we get Bert's opinion?" Or as Pat would say, "Get Roger's opinion." Then Roger can make the recommendation, can't he? Roger then can call up and raise the money, can't he? That's why Jerry Brown is having money-raising trouble right now, because there's no loyalty to him. People that help him think he doesn't care about them, and these are not special-interest money. Special-interest money you can always get. There's always that around. People that give even though they don't have to, but they want to be part of the scene; they don't care. They never got thanked.

Morris: Is that what makes the difference in your experience?

Coffey: I think it makes a difference, whether it be local or up there. Young George Miller's problem was his father never developed a funding base in this county. He never really asked, never needed any. He returned money.

Morris: Is that because campaigns didn't cost that much?

Coffey: They didn't cost that much and we didn't spend that much, and we didn't go through all the nonsense that campaigns go through. We had a tight overhead. Bert [would] sit in the room and put out some mailers and we'd win the election because he was in good shape. Right?

Morris: Yes.

Coffey: Okay. He left in 1968 six weeks before an election, the year that Humphrey was losing. George said, "Well, I'll tell you, I'm leaving you some money. Spend it; do what you want; tell people I'm away. Do what you want with it. I'm going away." That's what killed him, that trip. He came back and had a terrible cough and was on the boat and he died, suddenly. He came back in November, right, December. We ran the campaign and had \$11,000 left over. He said, "How come you didn't spend it?" But that was the trust. It was money. I could do anything I wanted with it.

When he died, I said to his son, "George, I've got \$11,000. It's in a trust account that Al DeRoo, the accountant, set up for us--I did, for George, in that campaign. I didn't spend all the money." Money would come in, you see. We didn't ask for it. I gave it to George on this basis--I said, "It's either for law school or as a contribution to your campaign. (I'll work it out and you'll pay taxes on it.)" [He said,] "You're on."

So he had \$11,000 to start with. That was in his ill-fated senatorial campaign when we ran county-wide against [John] Nejedly and we didn't have the registration. There was only 53 percent [Democratic registration] in the county. See, our congressional district is 59 percent. [That election was not winnable. But George didn't want others in his father's seat, and Jack wouldn't run for it, so he ran. He won in the primary, but lost in November; it was a vicious campaign. BC 3/31/80]

So anyway, we don't have an economic base in this county. George never developed it. [Jerome] Waldie did. It takes personal talk, personal visitations, and George doesn't know these people and doesn't have time for it. So we don't find it easy raising money. I'm developing some other techniques right now--phone solicitation, small givers. Right now I've got pledges from seven hundred people at an average of \$10 apiece. This is not public right now, but that's what I've got. You know, we spend the least amount of money in this state really for campaigns. Guys have money in the bank; it's not unusual for a senator to have \$100,000 in the bank or a congressman to have money in the bank. Less now, with reporting, but--

Morris: Is that because you know Contra Costa County that well?

Coffey: No, it's because we don't do our job in terms of money. We let people abuse the privileges of democracy. [laughter] That is, you're available and it doesn't cost you. I mean really.

Morris: One of the big tough questions in politics increasingly is how much it costs, and what that does--

Coffey: Yes. We spent about between thirty and forty [thousand dollars] two years ago, which is probably the lowest in the state, and we got 74%, one of the highest votes, for George, in the state. But this time I would like to have \$50,000 and burn it in the last six weeks because I don't know what the folks are thinking out there.

I'm waiting really--and I must confess that I don't talk too much about it--on polls that other people are going to take. Then I'll take one. The polls this morning that I heard about tell me a few interesting things. One is that Jerry's moving up very strongly, much more than the 7% he had after [the primary]. I think he's probably between 16% and 22%, depending on how you judge it right now. Merv Dymally is in trouble. He's got a lot of undecided on the Democratic side, as of this weekend. Yvonne [Burke] looks like she has a possibility, a shot at it. But it also tells you where Jerry's at.

Now, [the fact that] Jerry's that way means that the public is very discerning, perceptive, influenced by factors, rightly or wrongly. In Dymally's case it could be wrongly, or vice versa, or rightly. Or wrongly being for Jerry--maybe they shouldn't be. I don't know what the public's thinking. But what I've got to know is what the public is thinking before I can advise anybody how to spend money.

I, for example, am telling people around the state--very few listen; everybody agrees--to just register [voters] where your natural allies are. As I was quoted on the AP [Associated Press] out of Santa Fe: "Bert Coffey said, 'You don't have to spend any money or hire a consultant for \$1,000 to tell you how to register. Just get off the freeway and go where the poor people live.'" And that's it. But they're not motivated to vote. A lot of poor people have been hurt by Jarvis-Gann, so I don't know. But we are concentrating on brown and black, and that's where Jerry needs to have it. That's where his base is. That's where Teddy Kennedy's base is. The strongest man in California today is Teddy Kennedy. I invited him two and a half months ago to come to the state in October.

Morris: Will he come and campaign for Brown?

Coffey: I think he will, campaign on behalf of the California Democratic party. The Governor doesn't call for any rescue team, so I'm predicting that. See, my experience has helped. I know professionally what they will do, so I get time to think about it. I published this story in our party paper saying I'm inviting these people, so nobody can ever say that it's a rescue squad for anybody.

Morris: Do you keep files on your past political campaigns and experience?

Coffey: No. I'm terrible. [laughter] I don't believe in it. Somebody might have some things. I might have some things. But I really don't. I know that after George died they threw a lot of things away out of his attic, but some people saved some things.

Morris: Do you keep it all in your head?

Coffey: No, no. I have a terrible memory. I have to be refreshed. That's why I was reluctant to talk to you, but as you ask me questions, see, I could talk for three days now, the way you talk. It's nostalgic. You walk in; Richard Richards calls me the first time in ten years, right?

Morris: That's fantastic.

Coffey: You can trigger it. Of course, it's disjointed and jumps around, but you have helped. My memory isn't that good. People always tell me things that I've said or done or what I should do in a certain situation. I nod very sagely because obviously they said I said it.

Morris: I'm thinking about it in terms of the mechanics of running it.

Coffey: My son, Colin, who is nineteen, has a great memory. He's a tremendously profound observer. The kid's really going to do something in politics if he wants to. He says the campaign we ran for young George from the very beginning to the time we won made it less likely for Jerry Waldie to run again for that seat.

He showed a very marked lack of character in deciding he was going to run for it after George was elected. So I said, "Over my dead body." I just sat here for two years, plotting, listening, watching, working with his staff, building a good staff, tremendous mailing program, town halls, just visibility after visibility. So, here's a young guy who said, "I don't really know many people," but everybody knew him. He loves it when somebody comes up and says, "Hello, George. I didn't know your father."

[After his campaign for governor (1974), Waldie said he wasn't going to run for Congress again, so Georgie decided to run. After the election, he sat down with Waldie to ask his advice and said he'd heard some rumors that Waldie was thinking of running again. Waldie said yes, he was going to exercise his option.

- Coffey: [Georgie was angry and I decided we'd be so strong that Waldie couldn't get support. I went to work and lined up enough supporters that they filled a four-page letter, and some of them had been Waldie's supporters. He thought young George would be like him and not do much, but Georgie has been active on a lot of issues, regardless of whether they were popular or not. BC 3/31/80]
- Morris: That's great. I think I've run out of all the questions that I had on my list. There's only one here, the 1958--
- Coffey: Oh, you did have questions? Have we covered them, really?
- Morris: I did. We've covered most of them.
- Coffey: How nice. How nice. I enjoyed it.
- Morris: Good.
- Coffey: My God, I didn't realize it was this late. I've taken the day off, so don't worry about it.
- Morris: Good.
- Coffey: I know you haven't. What's your last question?

1958 Election, an Iffy Question

- Morris: My last question is about the 1958 election when Pat Brown was elected and Goodwin Knight ran for the Senate and Bill Knowland ran for governor. Would Pat have won anyhow if Goodwin Knight had run again for his own job as governor?
- Coffey: [laughing] You know, I think you know more about that period than I do because you have read it again or looked through--I don't know. That's what Roosevelt used to call an iffy question, isn't it? It didn't happen that way. I don't know. I would say that that was the most incredible mess the Republicans pulled. Wasn't that right-to-work year too?
- Morris: Yes, and Knowland campaigned on right-to-work.
- Coffey: Yes. That was the last resurgence of the labor movement in this state. It was like a rattle before death. They really were able to get their act together then, registration, getting out the vote.

No, I think Pat would have won. That was Knight's second term? Or the first term?

Morris: He came in and finished Warren's term.

Coffey: Right, right.

Morris: And then he ran once on his own.

Coffey: It's so speculative--if you didn't have right-to-work, if you didn't have that incredible mess within the Republican party, it would have been a tough race. I've always said that any race in this state between a Democrat and a Republican on--I'm being redundant--on a statewide basis is a tough one. That's why when people say, "Gee, Bert, you said a year ago that Jerry was going to have a tough race," I said, "Yes, what's so bright about that? It's got to be a tough race."

Voting Trends and Political Purposes

Coffey: Even as I say to you this afternoon that the polls, by Jerry's own commissioned firm (which doesn't mean it's favorable; they have to be terribly honest) look very encouraging. But I've got to tell you he was so far ahead in his first race, and I watched that dumb campaign slip down to where, you know, another day--which is always stupid; when people talk about another day, that's nonsense. He was just blowing his campaign.

I wonder what he's going to do besides talk about [Proposition] 13. You know, along about October there are going to be some other things to talk about. I just worry about it. That's why, you see, I think we're going to be on a roller coaster in this campaign. I feel you're going to find the people very selective. They're going to split their ballots. They are in many districts going to vote down below against incumbents in very, very tough races, if their incumbent is in a marginal area and hasn't done the job.

For example, I've asked people to examine their ballot in June and the results. I've raised the question. I told Tracy Wood of UPI [United Press International], "Why don't you do some research and do a story." The only one that's been similar to that is young Dave Cheit of the Berkeley Independent Gazette. He called me on that. But what I told Tracy and I told the others, "Examine how many votes you've got on your Democratic ballot, relate that to the total vote cast, compare that to two years ago, and I bet you that on your line you've got at least 10 percent less."

Morris: Voting Democratic?

Coffey: Voting for the Democrat incumbents within the Democratic primary on a Democratic ballot. If two hundred thousand people voted, how many votes did you get this time as opposed to last time? I said as a wild guess, "I bet you we drop 10 percent." What I found in my district here for George is that we dropped last time 18 to 20 percent. What happens is that people will vote for president and governor and then diminish. You follow me?

Morris: Oh yes, the drop-off in the number of votes down the ticket.

Coffey: The drop-off, particularly if you're unopposed. This time George got an extra 10 percent--to put it that way--not voting for him.

Morris: Yes, so they're not paying attention.

Coffey: Or they're saying, "Screw all incumbents," which I tend to believe was the expression. There's always a 15 to 20 percent drop-off, but this time there was an extra drop-off that didn't want to vote for anybody; or if there was a challenger, the challenger instead of getting, say, 12 percent might have gotten 22 or 29 percent, as a protest.

Query. How does that proceed from June 7 to November? What factors will exist to change that? It all depends on the districts. If Jerry is doing well now, it means that he is dissipating that anger. He is turning that around. It is indeed what he has said, "Jarvis-Gann could be my Cuban missile crisis." Or as I say in street language, "The ball's in Jerry's court," and it's a question of what he does with the ball. I've got to believe he knows how to hit it. That's what I have said.

Morris: Unless it boomerangs with people who say, "On June 1, he was saying Jarvis-Gann is terrible."

Coffey: Yes, that's what the ads are saying. But they're just getting this Dorothy Crory poll, which is being analyzed this week, and it's not saying that that's had the effect. The thing that I say is that has to keep going before it has an effect. They'll have to spend hundreds of thousands on that.

Morris: To keep that momentum?

Coffey: To keep that attack going against Jerry, about which you are warning. The one that I fear the most and I don't know how to handle it--I think they're complicating it too much--is the question of surplus. Wasn't the governor lying to you? Didn't he

Coffey: say last year you had a billion, and how they have six billion, and wouldn't that money be better in your pocket? That's what they're saying now. Now if they can get it down more into street language and spend the millions around that, they can hurt. But so far he seems to be walking in manure. He's just escaping that so far, even though the attack is on now.

But what I'm trying to say to you in conclusion is that I think it's very interesting and very important that all of us in politics this year watch not only the statewide effects of what Jerry and Younger are doing, but, in each district, to kind of judge what the incumbents are doing and not doing.

I, for example, am doing nothing right now. Nothing. When Jack Knox says to me, "Aren't we going to have any signs up with Georgie?" I say, "What do you need signs for? They know your name. It's been sixteen, seventeen years. What I think I'll do for you, when the time is right, is we'll probably develop a series of letters in all parts of the district and market them, telling how much money you saved the taxpayer and how many appropriations you voted against in Ways and Means."

I thought, you know, that I was being very callous, so I asked Paul Kinney, the majority consultant chief for Leo McCarthy, and I said, probably a little stupidly, "Gee, I hope you're coaching your people when they're out helping around the state this year (that's off the record) to talk about money." Before I finished the line, he says, "Listen, you'd be surprised how many billions each of our people has saved the people of this state," because it is true that in Ways and Means motions are made or appropriations are hoped for that are turned down. Now if you add that up and you start saying that to people, then you're not a spendthrift Democrat; it's the other Democrat that's the spendthrift. See?

Morris: Yes.

Coffey: It's not Jerry. He's really cheap; he's frugal. See? They're trying to change that image now, on the other side. We have to maintain it. But the tragedy of all this is we're not dealing with the purpose of politics.

The purpose of politics is to create a government that's sensitive to people's needs. Now people need more than one thing. They need a fair tax system. We're leading them to believe that by cutbacks we can solve problems, and they know they can't. So what they do, the people, is they say, "You're not really taking off the fat." The fat is somebody who has a job that you want, or the fat is an administrator. And what do they want? They want the administrator fired.

Coffey: George Miller predicted there would be this complaint about taxes and said something should be done then. "Every time I propose revising the income tax, they scream," he'd say, "And applaud when I mention sales tax, which is triggered by inflation." I keep warning that it's important, this surplus and how it's spent.

Politics is now distorted. The purpose should be how to have a responsive government, responsive in what money should be spent for. And the way to find that out is to talk to people. That's what I plan to do. You need to know what the economy is doing too--George Miller could tell what the economy was like by how many cars were being sold.

Morris: One last question: with your skill and experience in politics, have you ever thought of running for office yourself?

Coffey: Once, maybe. But not after HUAC.

Transcriber: Teresa Allen
Final Typist: Marilyn White

TAPE GUIDE -- Bert Coffey

Date of Interview: July 31, 1978

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Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Coleman Blease

A LOBBYIST VIEWS THE KNIGHT-BROWN ERA

An Interview Conducted by
James Rowland
in 1979

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Coleman A. Blease was interviewed by the Regional Oral History Office for the Goodwin Knight-Edmund (Pat) Brown era segment of its Governmental History Documentation Project. His prominence as a lobbyist for the Friends' Committee on Legislation and the American Civil Liberties Union, his influential role in the creation of the Assembly Criminal Procedure Committee, and his active hand in designing and drafting progressive criminal justice legislation made him an invaluable contributor to our record of issues and events in the 1953-1966 period.

The Blease name carries a rich, if not notorious, heritage in South Carolina history. Connected to this legacy in name and ancestry, his turn to liberal philosophy and Quaker humanitarianism may be more than adolescent influence. Born in San Francisco and raised in the Bay Area and Carson City, Nevada, Blease came to the University of California, Berkeley, after high school in San Rafael, California. His original ambition to major in engineering did a turnabout upon encountering Jacobus tenBroek, renowned speech professor on the Berkeley campus. TenBroek's perceptive and analytical mind combined with his rhetorical skills contributed to Blease's decision to enroll at Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law upon completing his undergraduate studies. After finishing law school in the mid-1950s, he devoted more time to Quaker beliefs and became active in the Quaker's Friends' Committee on Legislation. In 1957, he became the first paid lobbyist for the Friends' Committee.

Once in Sacramento, he developed an expertise on criminal justice legislation and broadened his influence well beyond the expected limits of most citizen advocacy groups. By adopting Assemblyman Phil Burton's method of cataloging political data, he refined his lobbying strategy and focused on the Assembly Judiciary Committee. In 1959, he was instrumental in persuading Assembly Speaker Ralph Brown to create the Assembly Criminal Procedure Committee. Setting his sights not only on criminal justice but also on parliamentary procedure, his advice and consultation were frequently sought by members of the criminal procedure committee. He played an equally active role in the designing and drafting of progressive criminal justice proposals, much of which is now law. Leaving the Friends' Committee in 1960 to lobby for the ACLU, he was active in civil liberty and environmental causes until 1979 when he was appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. to the Sacramento district of the state court of appeal.

As a recent appointee to the bench and a perpetual workaholic, Judge Blease was difficult to schedule for an interview. When our calendars coincided on September 6, 1979, we met in his spacious court chamber cluttered with legal texts and reports. After customary introductions, he began the interview with enthusiasm and talked of his personal and family history, developing his lobbying career with the Friends' Committee and the ACLU, and effects

of partisan politics and reapportionment on lobbying activities. Our second interview session was recorded on September 11, 1979, again in his court chamber. At this final session he talked on personalities in the governor's office, the legislature, and the third house, and concluded the interview with recollections of key issues that he followed as a lobbyist.

After editing, the interview transcript was forwarded to Judge Blease for final review. He returned the transcript to our office with no amendments or corrections, preferring to leave it in its original form.

Through mental rummagings and intensive philosophical analysis, Coleman Blease has provided us with a foundation for understanding the dynamics of issue-oriented decision making in state government. And by conscious or unconscious intent he provided us with insights on his personal makeup--that subjective and somewhat intangible quality that moves one to excel. What this manuscript represents is not only reminiscences on legislative give-and-take during the Knight-Brown era, but a blueprint for gaining expertise and recognition in the political realm.

James H. Rowland
Interviewer-Editor

16 September 1980
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

I PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

[Interview 1: September 6, 1979]##

Family Genealogy

Rowland: Why don't you begin with about ten or so minutes of family genealogy and all of that. I think I outlined that for you in the letter I sent. We're mainly interested in your family origins as far back as you want to go--your relations with your mother, father, et cetera. Why don't you begin on that general theme and we'll slowly get into the topic of the legislature and the Knight-Brown era.

Blease: All right. I was born in San Francisco in 1929. On my father's side are southerners.

Rowland: From where?

Blease: Well, my father was born, I believe, in West Virginia.

Rowland: How far back does his family go in West Virginia?

Blease: Well, I don't know if it goes back very far in West Virginia. The family roots go down through South Carolina and the Blease family was either prominent or notorious, depending upon your view of it, in South Carolina. In fact, I was named after my grandfather's half-brother, Coleman Livingston Blease, who was a Senator and governor of South Carolina.

Rowland: Was this prior to the Civil War?

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 71.

Blease: No.

Rowland: Or after Reconstruction?

Blease: Roughly, spanning the first four decades of the century. I think he held public office up through the early '40s, somewhere around there.

Rowland: Now, you said your family was notorious. How so?

Blease: Well, he was generally linked in the history books with Pitchfork Ben Tillman, and they're very prominent racists. In fact, people send me things, various documents, from time to time, informing me roughly of what I already know. He was in the United States Senate and his prime concerns were, I suppose, the preservation of lynching, the protection of white womanhood, and the protection of the Coca Cola Company. Anyway, that's my father's side of the family.

Rowland: What about the Civil War period? Was your family involved in the Confederacy?

Blease: I don't know, I don't know. I think they go back a long way in the South.

Rowland: Being West Virginia, that was a border state.

Blease: Yes. Somewhere in there. And most of the Bleases, as I understand it, are confined to the South or the border states; there are hardly any out here in California or in the West.

Rowland: Were your father's ancestors in South Carolina? Is that true?

Blease: Yes, right.

Rowland: Were they predominantly plantation owners?

Blease: No, I doubt it. I don't know that much about it.

Rowland: And your mother's side?

Blease: My mother comes from Carson City, Nevada, and her mother grew up in --I think she was born in Genoa, which is the oldest town in Nevada, in the valley outside of Minden. Her family were, I guess, ranchers at one time. By the time I was born most of that family had died, or that family line had died. It is largely extinct now, as far as I know.

Rowland: How did your mother and father meet?

Blease: Well, I think they met--my mother and her sister had both, I think, come to work and live in San Francisco, and I think she met my father there.

Rowland: Doing what?

Blease: Well, he was a merchant seaman, had been all over the world. He met her and they settled in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Rowland: Now, how many were there in your family?

Blease: Well, I have one brother. I have one cousin from my grandmother's side of the family. And then there's my brother's family. My mother and my aunt, plus my family, are really the only family that I have.

Rowland: Who were you closest to in those years in your family?

Blease: You mean, in growing up?

Rowland: Yes. In your immediate family, yes.

Blease: My mother and my father and my grandmother. We spent a lot of time in Carson City--summers and holidays, Christmas--up through the time I was about twelve or thirteen years of age.

Rowland: Can you give us kind of a portrait of your mother and father?

Blease: They both had a limited education. My father went to the eighth grade, my mother to the twelfth grade. I suppose the characteristic that is most--[pauses]

I'll tell you a couple of things about my father, because I think that my relations with him, which were rather close, can be illustrated with a story. When my father came to California he had a very pronounced southern accent. He, of course, had very little education and he determined that if he would rid himself of the southern accent, and that he would gain, I guess, a northern accent or what he viewed as being good diction--and he succeeded in that. As a matter of fact, to the day of his death he spoke--always, as I can recall it--he always spoke in complete sentences and in complete paragraphs, and he had magnificent and flawless diction. And I never knew--I don't ever recall his speaking other than that way; I hear this only from my mother. He did that as an exercise of his own will power, and there are numerous other stories. He was a very determined and very tough, very hard-nosed person with very pronounced views--mostly, as I've come to identify, rather different from the ones I hold now.

Rowland: Was that a rebellion against your father's views?

Blease: No, I never--no. No, I never did rebel in the ordinary sense. My father suffered from a paresis; he contracted it in the First World War. So, he spent the last twenty years or so of his life in a veterans' home. So, from the time that I was about sixteen or so, I essentially had no father, and up to that point I was not rebellious and, as a matter of fact, I don't think I am to this day. Other people may have different views.

My mother--I suppose her marked characteristic was [that] she has very strong views (and is very vocal about them) which are quite different from mine. On the other hand, my earliest memories of her were with her helping people. I was always sent over to weed some old lady's garden who couldn't do it. And during all the years that she worked in San Francisco--she had a small mimeograph shop--it was always filled with--

Rowland: She ran a shop?

Blease: Yes. She bought a small shop, after my father was hospitalized, to earn a living. She exhausted what few funds they had, and so she went and earned a living with the mimeograph shop, and she always had it filled with old people. And to this day she is a person of contradictions. She rails against all kinds of supposed inadequacies of this world, but she's very--in her personal dealings with people, very generous, other than her family.

Rowland: Yes. Your mother was the more liberal one in the family?

Blease: No, neither one of them were liberal.

Rowland: Neither one of them? Where did you get your bent towards the liberal view?

Blease: My father got perfect diction through an exercise of the will, and through an exercise of the will I examined the foundations of my origins and worked through in my own head a philosophy which became satisfying. Obviously, lots of people were influential.

Influences in the Formative Years

Rowland: Who were those people?

Blease: Well, teachers--family and friends. I really was essentially on my own from the time I was about sixteen, and then I went back to Berkeley when I was seventeen.

Rowland: Berkeley High School or the University of California?

Blease: The University of California. I went to high school in Marin County, in San Rafael, and I left San Rafael, and I was the only one from my class that went to the university at that time. So, when I went over there I essentially didn't know anybody. I was on my own, but I met --it was a very--

Rowland: In those formative years, in those adolescent years--

Blease: Very formative. But also I went to Berkeley at a very important time, because it was 1947, right after the war, and the university was filled with veterans, lots of older people, who had been all over the world and had many pronounced views, most of which I had never heard, and I had difficulty even fathoming what they were. They were organizing the Berkeley Co-op and they had political views which were endlessly fascinating to me but totally foreign. I didn't know anything about those things. So, I had a lot of time to think about a lot of things.

Rowland: Was it the years at the Berkeley campus then that--?

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: Any particular outstanding people that you--?

Blease: Oh, yes. Well, I think the one person that would stand head and shoulders above everybody else was Jacobus tenBroek.

Rowland: And he was--?

Blease: Well, at the time, I guess, I initially met him, he was chairman of the Speech Department at the university. He was leader or founder of the National Federation of the Blind; he was blind himself. And through his classes and through him I met blind people and I met a lot of other people, people in all kinds of social and political movements.

But when I discovered--well, maybe I ought to back up a moment, because when I went to the university I enrolled in the College of Electrical Engineering. In fact, I spent three years in electrical engineering and would have left it earlier than that, but I was very stubborn and was determined initially to finish it out before I did something else, and I then decided that was not--

Rowland: But from electrical engineering to law [laughter]--that's a fascinating movement.

Blease: No, not really, not really. I'd come to appreciate the hard sciences or disciplines being sometimes more rewarding than the soft or mushy ones, which are the so-called social sciences.

Rowland: Yes. You certainly come out as a Renaissance man in that sense, appreciating both realms.

Blease: Well, that's something, you know, that appeals to me, because one of the things that happened in all of that was that after my first three years at the university I'd had virtually no courses in anything but mathematics, physics, engineering courses. They require almost no knowledge of anything other than--

Rowland: But you came across tenBroek in one of the speech classes you took?

Blease: Yes, in one of the speech classes. And then when I switched from electrical engineering to political science--well, I had determined at that time to go to law school, before I got out of electrical engineering, and then I'd charted a course that would enable me to complete my undergraduate work, which then took an additional year. Somewhere in there I discovered tenBroek, and when I discovered him I decided I would take every course that he offered, no matter what. If he'd offered a course in knitting, I would have taken it.

Rowland: What was it about tenBroek that particularly inspired you?

Blease: A marvelously analytical mind, a marvelously analytical and challenging mind, a superb teacher, highly disciplined, demanded a great deal of students--a very rewarding process. So, I took all of his courses, five or six or whatever, and [had] several battles with the university over whether they would accept his courses for this, that, or the other requirement, and, I think, in most of which I prevailed. That perspective of it was the most impressive to me.

Rowland: And he encouraged you to go to law school?

Blease: Well, I don't think he--no, he didn't proselytize at all. He was an example. I think most people went to his courses determined that, gee, that would be the place to go. They were, of course, aware that he was a lawyer and had these marvelous legal--he had all the skills--rhetorical, analytical, and all of the skills. There were numbers of people in his classes who went to law school. Some of them are here [in Sacramento] now. Fred Marler, Jr. was a superior court judge who was in one of my classes, and any number of other people.

Deciding on the Study of Law

Rowland: Were there any reasons why you decided to go into law?

Blease: [pauses to think] Well, when I decided to get out of electrical engineering, I wanted to try to make some rational decision about what I was going to be or do, and I went and took a battery of all these tests.

Rowland: Was that the old punch test? [laughter]

Blease: Yes, a variety of these tests for motivation and ability. And essentially what they said was that I could do a number of things, but I seemed to be motivated either to be a lawyer or a minister. Since my religious views, or my non-religious views, essentially prevented one of those, the other alternative was rather clear. [chuckles]

Rowland: That itself is a subject that many of our interviewees have mentioned: the effect of the church on their upbringing. Did that have any influence on you?

Blease: Well, I had a modest religious upbringing as an Episcopalian and attended church fairly regularly and, you know, asked a lot of questions which were essentially religious ones, especially after family tragedies. I suppose then one naturally asks for some explanation about why various illnesses or other things are visited on some people and not on others. I don't know. Maybe those are-- I guess you'd call them religious or philosophical questions. I think it's important to characterize them one or the other. But I had those, and I was sort of in and out, at some periods, of church-related things. I had quite a bout with the Quakers for a while.

Rowland: A bout with the Quakers?

Blease: I mean, I attended Quaker meetings and attempted to confront Quaker principles and understand them. I never wanted to--

Rowland: Why were you attracted to Quakerism?

Blease: I was attracted to their humanitarian views, views which I think to this day are still essentially correct. I find it difficult to believe how anybody could not aspire to seeing a world without hunger, and a world without racism, and a world in which people have civil liberties and all those things, and a world in which people are adequately housed and children have an opportunity to grow up. Essentially the Quakers make no distinctions about a

Blease: person's political, economic, or other beliefs. I found that very attractive then; I find it attractive now. That is, I can see no reason to distinguish as to any particular views, as a matter of principle, of course.

Rowland: Yes. Now, you went through law school, and finished when?

Blease: Nineteen fifty-five.

Rowland: Nineteen fifty-five. Are you married?

Blease: Yes, I'm married and have two children.

Rowland: Did you meet your wife in law school, or--?

Blease: No. I met her, oh, about four years after I got out of law school, four years after I got out of law school.

Rowland: What were the circumstances around the--?

Blease: Well, by that time I had been--when I got out of law school, I worked for a year drafting oil and gas leases, and then went to work for the Quakers. I was lobbyist for the Friends Committee on Legislation.

Rowland: You said you drafted oil and gas leases?

Blease: Yes, the only job I could get after I got out of law school for a while. I was still subject to the selective service. So, I took this job drafting oil and gas leases, and as soon as I-- So, I did that until I--I had been active in going to Quaker meetings.

Rowland: Who did you work for under the--drafting oil and gas leases?

Blease: Oh, yes. That was a fellow who was an oil engineer who had heavily invested in the Bakersfield area and had secured numerous limited partners to invest in his oil wells. So, there were a lot of housekeeping chores to be done with respect to that. Of course, essentially now, as then, you know, limited partnerships are attractive tax devices in allowing various tax benefits to go through from the developer of the wells through the investors, which cannot be done in a corporate form.

Rowland: Again, getting back to your wife and how you met your wife--

Blease: I met her when I was out on a speaking tour in southern California for the Friends and had gone out to speak to the Beverly Hills Democratic Club on the death penalty. I was there with Lester McMillan, who was an author of death penalty legislation. I met her there in October and we got married a few weeks later.

II ADVOCATING FOR THE FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION

Background to a Lobbying Career

Rowland: Well, maybe we can get on to another group of questions here. I had some rather general questions on the legislature, the governor's office, and lobbyists, but I'm interested in how you got into the role as an advocate for the Friends Committee on Legislation.

Blease: Well, I had been, as I said, active in going to Quaker meetings and in Quaker activities at some point in, I guess, the latter couple of years when I was in law school, and had gotten active with the Friends Committee on Legislation the year after I got out of law school, and had volunteered to do a number of things--write some papers on farm labor and the like. And I was greatly attracted to doing something about humanitarian concerns. At the end of 1956, I guess, they were able to raise enough money to hire a lobbyist. They'd had a volunteer lobbyist prior to that time.

Rowland: Who was the lobbyist prior to that?

Blease: Nancy Jewell.

Rowland: What attracted you to the idea of lobbying in Sacramento?

Blease: Well, I was attracted to the humanitarian concerns. I was interested in political life. I was not particularly attracted to any--I think I've probably always gravitated toward some place where you could accomplish something institutionally within the system. But I was never active, you know, in the ordinary political organizing things. I sought some area in which one could apply skills to these issues. I suppose somewhere along the line I got to become somewhat of a rationalist and believed, and still believe, that there's a role for reason in this world despite plenty of evidence to the contrary.
[chuckles]

Blease: I was really very uncertain after I got out of law school as to whether I would become a lawyer in the ordinary sense. I had been very much interested in constitutional law matters and those kinds of things as an undergraduate and had taken all those courses in addition to the tenBroek courses, and I couldn't quite see the relationship between the general law school matters--torts and real property and all those issues--to those subjects. I soon discovered that I was totally wrong about all that, but I'll mention that in a moment.

So, I'd really sort of for a while given up the idea of practicing law in the ordinary sense. So, there was this job available lobbying that fit into these other things. I was working with extraordinarily able and very pleasant people, and those three years that I spent were very profitable years.

We came to the legislature. It was a great place to learn to really develop something which was not as developed then as it is now, which was lobbying for what you'd call causes. Some people call [it] "good-guy lobbying." But there wasn't as much of it then as there is now. So, it was essentially there, at least for me, to be--it was a subject to be invented. With my law degree and a law background, I was interested in legal matters. I was interested in the skills that are involved. In fact, I had taken Frank Newman's course in legislation when I was at Boalt Hall. I had made various applications to try to get employment in the congress somewhere, on some committee staff. So, it was a good opportunity.

Rowland: What prior experience or involvement did you have in politics, in party politics?

Blease: I had very little experience at all. I had very little experience with political organizations. I had attended meetings of various political groups, but I had never identified very closely--

Rowland: Which groups were they?

Blease: Oh, a variety of them. Political groups on the left, pacifist groups--

Rowland: After World War II?

Blease: Yes, during the early 1950s, I--

Rowland: The Korean War?

Blease: Yes. During the Korean War, I went around circulating literature opposing universal military training. I suppose today they would be viewed as somewhere on the Democratic left.

Rowland: During that fifty years, of course, the McCarthy fear and hysteria were running rampant.

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: How did that affect your destiny towards lobbying and working for the "good guys"?

Blease: I don't know that it affected it at all. It stimulated me to want to deal with all those issues. I became interested in the concrete issues: the whole loyalty and security thing, which occupied a lot of the tension for the better part of the decade.

Rowland: Had you come into some personal encounter with--

Blease: No, no.

Rowland: --anti-communist hysteria at all?

Blease: Well, personal contact? No, no. And never personally the subject of any of it on either side. Really, I suppose, whenever other people view it, I've always taken what I have considered a rather modest position with respect to it.

But I always essentially try to see some way in which the application of whatever skills you have--you could try to change it in some way. But I was certainly well aware of all the issues involving McCarthyism and things that I read about that had to do with matters of loyalty and security. I certainly read all the cases. Before I went to law school I studied loyalty oath decisions and Smith Act decisions and all those things.

Goals of the FCL

Rowland: Now, beginning as a lobbyist for the Friends Committee on Legislation --what was the purpose of the Friends Committee?

Blease: Well, when I first asked them that--what was the purpose generally of the organization?--they said it was to bring world peace, to eliminate hunger, and to bring civil liberties and civil rights for all. And I asked them if it was an eight-to-five job. [chuckles] They're very expansive concerns. In fact, one of the most troublesome things about it all was just sort of bottling it in some way, how you translate all those things into things which something could be done about.

Blease: In the legislative scene it's rather a lot easier once you define that you're going to get into certain areas. There was a strong civil liberties side to the Friends Committee legislation. Essentially what they did was to take these larger issues, broader issues --they called them Friends concerns--and take a look at the legislative scene and see where some gap needed to be filled. In those earlier days, there was nobody there lobbying dealing directly with civil liberties matters, so they attempted to fill in--

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Blease: The Friends were concerned with loyalty and security matters and free speech matters; organizational rights; and then, in cooperation with others, civil rights matters and fair political practices, fair housing, religious matters--they were concerned with religious freedom. So, those areas got carved rather easily because you carved out the legislation which affected those and then you attempted to do something about it.

Building an Expertise

Rowland: Yes. One of our interviewees stated a theory he had about lobbyists and the difference between corporate lobbyists and public-interest lobbyists or the cause lobbyists, and that is, the cause lobbyists are carving out too large of a pie to deal with and they can't be effective because they are working with that large pie, whereas the special-interest lobbyists are merely interested in their special interest and they're able to be more effective. How would you view that theory?

Blease: I think it's essentially correct, that the question of allocation of scarce resources is an absolutely critical problem for cause lobbyists, and the question of the mastery of the subject matter is an even bigger problem because you lack the resources to have back-up. Well, there are a number of things about the legislature which are absolutely critical, and I discovered these things very early in the game. I'll tell you in part how I discovered them, because I met some people who were absolutely marvelous at them. I'll tell you one of them-- Philip Burton. I could tell you essentially my views on the political process. If they weren't a hundred percent coincident with Philip Burton's, I would be rather surprised at it.

Rowland: Now, when you came up here, Philip Burton was in the assembly?

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: And you had known him prior to--?

Blease: No.

Rowland: You didn't?

Blease: No, no. I met all those people in the legislature. I found somebody who shared, as near as I could tell, all of the concerns that we [the Friends] shared. I found a person who was incredibly tough-minded politically and understood that the legislative process is a no-holds-barred process which affects people's lives; that is, he took it seriously.

Rowland: Who was that?

Blease: Philip Burton. It is a major insight into life to treat it seriously and not frivolously. It imposes great burdens on you, and there is a great problem with people who get into causes in thinking that merely being identified with causes is sufficient. It's not at all. It's not a cocktail lounge. And my view, and it was Burton's view too, is that there's no room for that. It imposes on you a great burden to be absolutely clear about what it is that you're doing and who's affected and why. It imposes an absolute burden on you to become as skillful as you can about that task and to acquire all the skills that are involved in it. It imposes an absolute burden on you to understand some aspects of the political process which are difficult to come by because they're not taught in the civics books.

The principle of being co-opted--not just a matter of the legislative thing. Everybody in the world is co-opted. They're co-opted because they want to live somewhere in the world. Unless you're a hermit, you want to live somewhere, whether it be the university or in a monastery or in the legislature or in the court. [chuckles] You've got to learn that there are rules to those institutions that are indispensable and that if you're going to live there, you will abide by those rules. If you don't abide by those rules, then you are a "revolutionary" with respect to that institution; you don't belong there.

If you go to lobby, you accept the institution of the legislature and the political process as being a legitimate and viable thing, and you learn the rules--essential. If you don't want to do that, don't go there; it's not the place. You do it from some other posture. In that sense, it cannot be revolutionary and it can only be evolutionary if you seek to partake in the process.

Blease: Well, the example that I was going to give you is that one night late I was wandering through the building and I came by Burton's office and I found him in his office kneeling on the floor. He was putting together--he kept voluminous scrapbooks on the voting behavior of all kinds--hundreds of issues. He was clipping them out of the journals and pasting them in these books, and he was educating himself. I've never seen anybody else do this. He could tell you hundreds and hundreds of details about other members of the legislature. He knew--of course, he'd mastered the political process in their districts. He is to this day an expert in re-apportionment. He knows more about most people's districts than they know about [them] themselves. He knows their political composition. He knows the boundaries. He knows their statistical details. He has an enormous mass of information in the sense that he knows their voting behavior. I'm sure what he's done in the congress is do the same thing. I'll bet, out of 435 members of the house--the other 434--that he knows where they came from, and about their districts, and who lives in them, and who influences them.

Rowland: How did he catalogue all of this information?

Blease: Well, he has his own system, full of books, and he has an enormously retentive mind. He's a genius. But the point of it all--he also mastered subject matters. Every subject matter area that he got into heavily, he mastered it. In the welfare area, Phil knew more than anybody, the staff people and otherwise, about the subject matter of it. He combined this enormously detailed knowledge about the precise political relations, not just general ones--precise ones, on this issue, that issue, and that issue. Personal relationships--he could tell you hundreds of details about every person in the legislature. He would tie in to hundreds of pieces of knowledge about the legislation.

And he also was very tough-minded. He was never co-opted; that is, he knew what the price was. You see, the answer to co-optation is, you know what the price is. The price of doing anything in most institutions is to accept the general framework of the institution, to work within it. But unless you know what those rules are very consciously, you don't know what it is you've really accepted. It's really a Platonic view, or a Socratic view, of knowing thyself within a much more complicated context.

Now, the conscious knowledge of that or the exposition of it I find to be exceedingly rare. I know of almost nobody, except the people that I've dealt with and the people that I trained in the legislative process that this is the way you go about it, that it is not vague and it's not distant--it is exact, albeit complicated and full of surprises, as any complicated institution is. You have to master the forms and the details and the subject matter of it.

Blease: I learned this from Burton, and I watched him work, and he is to this day, probably next to Thaddeus Stephens, one of the greatest people in the history of American politics. There are very few people in this, in it, who have come to grips with all these facets of it in the way he has. If you've read anything about Thaddeus Stephens, you'll know that he was a master of the politics of it and a master of the detail of it.

Rowland: So, what you're saying is that he defined for you a way in which, as a cause lobbyist, you could be also as effective as a special-interest [lobbyist].

Blease: He took lamenting--he removed it from the place of lamenting to a system to be mastered.

You do things differently; well, I did. I used to tell people, and I think to this day it's the truth, I spent nine hours in the library for every hour I talk to a person, and I'll give you a thousand examples of how it is that that was the way to do it, because you ultimately come to influence people because they will believe you; you know. And other people may come and they won't know or won't have an answer, can't respond, and they will be at a deficit. I'm just isolating one aspect of the political process. There are a lot of these things, and the influence of economic wealth and other things are obviously apparent kinds of influences. But one of the things which I noticed and which is absolutely the case was [that] a number of people had enormous resources and controlled the votes and couldn't produce anything out of it because they had not mastered the subject matter or they did not understand quite how to accomplish--or what it would be in a statutory form. "In a statutory form" means the mastery of those codes, the interrelation of those codes.

Let me give you an example. One year--if you looked at the welfare area of things, you will find that we have the categorical aids in which we distinguish--there are inferior ones, generally, if you look at the codes, and ones which are superior. We generally give the better treatment to the blind and the crippled than we do the aged and the families with dependent children. And that's society's view of it, that amongst the needy there are the more deserving needy and the less deserving needy. The law reflects that principle.

TenBroek wrote a magnificent set of articles called California's Welfare Law in which he traced the origins of the welfare system to the Elizabethan poor laws. I read all those things. All the major principles which defined the welfare system you could see in a hundred code sections in there.

Blease: Well, anyway, one of the distinctions in the codes was that in the criminal area, if you were in the blind programs or in the rehabilitation programs, the disabled programs, if there was an allegation that something was taken to which somebody was not entitled, before you would bring a criminal action you could seek restitution that would be a part of the criminal action. So, you'll find two code sections over here, and you'll find no code sections over there. Oh, one year I just cross-indexed them. I just said, "The standards applicable in this case shall be the standards applicable in citing two other code sections"--totally opaque unless you understand the principle and what the other code sections do. That's in the law to this day. We just extended it to families with dependent children. It had been a subject of a lot of judicial action.

Rowland: Getting back to the subject of when you first came to Sacramento as a lobbyist for the Friends Committee, I wondered, how did you learn the roles that a lobbyist plays with legislators?

Blease: I learned by--

Rowland: Or what were those roles?

Blease: I sat for hundreds of hours in committees, and one of the things I discovered--take criminal law legislation. There was then, as there is today, a very broad group of persons interested in the criminal law, but the bulk of them were all district attorneys and Peace Officers' Associations and the like. They would come in and press for this or that legislation, and they would make various claims, and I at that time was relatively unknowledgeable about that. They'd make a claim; I would go and read about it. I'd come back and say, "I read this and they don't seem to square," or you read something else which deals with the specifics of it. You work your way through a whole raft of criminal laws. Over the seventeen years I was there, you go through, you know, several tens of thousands of those kinds of issues, because there are hundreds of--

Rowland: What attracted you to specialize in criminal law?

Blease: Well, because there wasn't anybody else doing it at the time. It is a major area of civil liberties and civil rights. The question of the application of criminal laws is a major issue in society. Drawing the lines between the appropriate and the inappropriate uses of police power is something which agitates the society enormously; it's absolutely critical.

Rowland: I have a few questions just on changes in lobbying and special privileges that some lobbyists might have had. One general question is: I wonder what special privileges former legislators have as lobbyists.

Blease: Access. Knowledge. It takes a while to learn the place over there and to get to know people. There are a lot of aspects to the problem. Part of it's access. Legislators are very busy people, much busier now than they used to be. It used to be easier when I got in there because they were only there six months, essentially, out of every two years. So, there were a lot of other times when you could study many different kinds of things. But their time now is enormously in demand. Gaining their attention--let's assume you have the best argument in the world, and let's just assume you would be totally persuasive if you could talk to given legislators. You have to be able to reach them, and you can't--

Rowland: Let's say, if I were a freshman lobbyist, how would I go about contacting these--?

Blease: You'd go knock on their door and try to make an appointment. If you already know them, you can talk to them in the hall, or you meet them in the john, or you see them in the back of the committee room. You catch their ear whenever--you know--and then give them the 30-second pitch. You have to become a master of very short argument. And, of course, the longer you're there, the more they identify you as being knowledgeable in some area, the more they will accept a truncated view of it; you can summarize the argument. So, what at the outset of it might take you two hours to try to persuade somebody about--you never have that time; at the end of it, two minutes may be enough. And if they'll take two minutes from you, you have a much better chance, obviously, with two minutes than two hours, so that having access to people and their accepting you as being knowledgeable is very important.

I'll give you an example of what happens if you don't have it. For a number of years, there was a major issue dealing with the law of pre-emption, whether the state laws prevail or whether local laws can be adopted in the interstices where there's no specific law--called the law of pre-emption by implication. There were a number of cases that came down, mostly had started out as civil liberties cases. I became interested in the subject matter because we had been somewhat successful at that time in exercising veto powers over the adoption of criminal legislation in the legislature. And to get around that--one way to get around it is to do the same thing at the local level. It was impossible, obviously, to deal with fifty-eight counties and hundreds of cities, and so the issue of pre-emption as an issue of the allocation of power is critical. So, we had not only to prevail at the legislature, but we had to keep local entities from being able to exercise power in the same area.

And when I started doing that, there was great pressure, not only from the police agencies but from the League of California Cities, County Supervisors Associations, to make major changes in

Blease: the law of pre-emption, which stems from our California constitution dealing with local government laws. And they were enormously persuasive. They'd been around there for decades. Their word was accepted. When I attempted initially to make an argument about it, nobody would believe me. They'd say, "Look, you're an expert on constitutional law, but what do you know about pre-emption?"

So, during one of those interim periods, I spent three or four months; I read all the cases in the law of pre-emption and I wrote a fifty-two page Law Review article--at that time, the longest one they'd ever had in the Hastings Law Journal--in which I surveyed all the cases and the entire history. I went up and distributed it and I was then accepted as an expert.

But, you see, I call that lobbying, but I spent it all in the library, and I was then accepted as an expert, and I persuaded a lot of people--persuaded labor organizations. And by the time I was through, I had the proxies of lots of labor organizations, agricultural associations--a lot of others that hadn't the faintest idea how these very generalized changes in the constitution would affect their interests. When they then accepted me as an expert and I had a ready example, they could then almost immediately see--once you focus somebody's attention and say, "This is what could happen to you by some local entity now exercising power where they had none before. Here is an example of something that would happen to you in this field."

So, what power did I have? I had no intrinsic power, but the power of communication of ideas would bring in labor and this group and that group. It did all the time. We'd go off and talk to corporations about the ways in which various laws would affect the corporate interests. Then you'd have corporate lobbyists on your side. That's to provide other people who have these narrow little bailiwicks to lobby in that were being transgressed--you had to explain it to them, because unless they were knowledgeable about these larger issues they wouldn't see it themselves. That absolutely happens to this day.

A few years ago, I drafted substantial key pieces of the Medical Malpractice Act. I was acting as a consultant to the Assembly Judiciary Committee, and I just did it. And they were insurance companies, and the governor's office, and hospital associations, and medical associations, and all that camp, and they never saw these issues. They never saw the precise impact of these things because they were each looking at it from a narrower point of view and they couldn't see the relationship between these more generalized things and their own interests.

Rowland: I'm wondering--when we were talking about power of lobbyists--there's a certain other aspect that the news media always plays up and that's the power of the "good old boy" club that exists between some lobbyists and legislators. I wondered if you might comment on that. For instance, how great was the influence of dinner, drinks, exclusive clubs, and friendships?

Blease: Well, friendships--dinners and drinks were an aspect of friendships, or at least they were opportunities to have friendships. Those still exist. They can exist as well without dinners and drinks and all that. I think--if you want to know anything about what has happened --the do-gooders are almost entirely wrong about Fair Political Practices Act and the rest of it.*

Rowland: You're against--?

Blease: Mostly it's nonsense.

Rowland: How come?

Blease: You can't paper-over power by those kinds of laws. You don't make the power of, let's say, a large economic organization go away because you say that their lobbyists can't have dinner or buy dinner for somebody. [laughter] If you think about it for a moment, it's absurd. It really is absurd. It doesn't go away; it exists. Now, if you want to get rid of that power, you better organize some other power and change more fundamentally the power relationships in our society. You know, we're not talking about something which operates in a vacuum. The legislature is responsive to an existing state of affairs; it changes and revolves within that state of affairs. It reflects, the law reflects, vast social institutions and economic institutions, and they cannot be changed by revealing to the light of day the relationships between people.

And, moreover, those people can corrupt the system with paper-work. I consider the FEPC to be an inept organization with potential for harm. Now, that's overstating it; other people make that point. Maybe it's just as well that people can't buy other people drinks and do those things. But they've missed almost the entire point of it. And do-gooders can't legislate--you want to talk about legislating morality--you can't legislate it in that sense. You will bring it about, but much slower, by amassing all these other

*The Fair Political Practices Act was passed as Proposition 9 by the voters in the 1974 state-wide election. It attempted to regulate lobbying and lobbyist expenses.

Blease: powers that will make for more fundamental change. You can't will it into being by some kind of cosmetic appeal that if we merely reveal these associations to the public, that will change it. For the most part, the public can't read it and can't grasp it; there's too much paperwork anyway. So, that kind of disclosure aspect works hardly or not at all.

But the "good old boy"--the access is obviously important. But they gain access, among other things--you will gain access by virtue of representing somebody. I years ago attended a dinner of one of Frank Newman's legislation classes. And a lobbyist who'd been there representing a large public utility for twenty-five years was finally booted out of his job by them, by his organization, really booted upstairs, and he came to this meeting.

Rowland: It wasn't Elmer Bromley, was it?

Blease: No. He came to this meeting and literally cried and explained to everybody that people [with whom] he'd had all these close relationships over the years no longer talked to him. This poor man had failed to understand that his relationships with all these people were, in fact, dictated by the fact that he represented major economic power. [chuckles] Of course, they were nice to him! He mistook that for being a personal relationship which existed between them. That's the far more important relationship. Now, we call it--you know, we have a way of characterizing this and making it into a personal relationship, but you have to understand that part of the personal relationship stems from your position. If you change--

Rowland: A chapter out of Advise and Consent. [chuckles]

Blease: If you change your position, you will change your influence ultimately. You see, it's more complicated than to say that's all there is to it. It isn't, obviously. An interest could change their lobbyist tomorrow and that lobbyist will walk in and be accorded an audience which is appropriate. Now, the legislators won't immediately get to know him, you know. It will take a while. But they will come ultimately to accept him as representing that interest because he does, in fact, represent it. They will take his word for that because that group tells them what that group understands this to mean, and it will carry that coin to the realm.

My objections--and I do not count myself a do-gooder, not because I don't think you ought to do good, but because I think most do-gooders are entirely misinformed about what it's about. That's why I love Phil Burton. There is absolutely no bullshit about all this. This is a serious thing in which there is a lot of hard work. And if I go and find--a lot of them think that they can

Blease: sit around in a bar and learn this. [chuckles] That's crazy. Be in the library, When you master that subject matter and master the forms of power which you have access to--knowledge is one aspect of it--then you will get the power which is important for that thing. And you will also stand in the shoes of the changes in society which represent that. As we gradually have environmental movements, there will be people representing them, and the environmental laws will gradually come with that.

Focusing on the Criminal Procedure Committee

Rowland: Now, I have some specific questions about changes in lobbying due to changes in the legislature, one of which--this is a question that came up through some of the research I've been doing. I was wondering, how did certain lobbyists seek consultation when committee and house changes occurred in both the senate and assembly?

Blease: Well, I don't know about a lot of other people because, again, I didn't sit in on these things. I can tell you relatively little about specific other lobbies, but I can tell you about what I did.

Rowland: Okay.

Blease: Let me just tell you what the principle of it was--very simple. In the civil liberties area or in the liberal area or the social area or whatever, you will get in the legislature a certain number of legislators who already represent those points of view. Right? You didn't elect them, and by and large it is beyond your power to do that. If that's the case, just forget it and just accept it. You enter a game in which the chess pieces are already there. There will be so many of your color and so many spaces to move, and that's one of the parameters of the system. Accept it. Don't claim something which is not the truth. So many of them confuse the movements or organizational movements with the capacity to lobby. That's not the way it works. You have to have a very fine appreciation of the way that the power works.

Well, anyway--although--well, it's not always been true--the bulk of those people will be within the Democratic party. It's not always true, because you could occasionally find people on given issues in the Republican party, at least in the early days. The liberal wing seems to have diminished if not vanished in these later years, but in the earlier years that was true. And you could find then--especially when there's some "spirit of more bipartisanship."

Blease: But nonetheless the bulk of these people were in the Democratic party. Now, curiously, always the smaller the Democratic party representation was, say, in the assembly, the greater the representation was of the liberals.

Rowland: Why was that?

Blease: Because you would pare them back to the more traditional Democratic districts, which would represent more traditional kinds of labor and social and other interests. The more you--

Rowland: These were predominantly urban representatives?

Blease: Yes. Predominantly urban, right. The black districts and brown districts--not so much brown districts. There are other factors running there. The black districts, Jewish districts, and whatever. Go and look at the Criminal Justice Committee over the years. Just go and count up how many Jews have been on that committee if you want to know how it works. That explains it. It's very simple.

You take that, and you understand there's a dynamic to it. There are so many people who already hold views substantially along the lines that you want to pursue, and there are others who won't. They will occupy some position because of their numbers within a larger system, the Democratic party. The Democratic party selects a Speaker, for example, or has during most of these years. That Speaker will owe allegiances to various pieces within the party, but they will have power which is [in] relation to the dynamic of their numbers and their strength and their leadership abilities and the others within that group. The larger the group there is with respect to the total, the more influence they have. And I always thought that we--that is, when I was a "we" then with those interests--would be better off with maybe a forty-three Democrat assembly than a fifty-three Democrat assembly, because you would still have the same people representing these interests, but the marginal ones who came up from marginal districts that could be taken away with this shift and that shift will not be here and they will not dilute the influence of the others.

You then go to the Speaker, or your agents go to the Speaker. Everybody needs somebody to act on his behalf; you need honchos to move it. You need them within these organizations; you need them on the committees. They then make the argument, which is essentially--it's a sound political argument--that the Speaker needs to protect all of his people if he wants to retain election. He does not want to expose them to the kinds of issues which will get them unelected. He needs to protect their backside. The way you protect it is through the committee system. You protect the greater group by

Blease: confining those issues in the smaller group, which was the reason why I got the Criminal Procedure Committee (now the Criminal Justice Committee). It was formed for the protection of the asses of the liberal members of the assembly. It was an explicit political argument.

Here's the way you do it. You use it as a funnel to keep that legislation off the floor [pounds desk] where it will embarrass the greater number of people. And those people [liberals] would always be for that, because it keeps it away from--

Rowland: Whose idea was that?

Blease: A number of people's ideas. But the person who achieved it initially was John O'Connell during the time when Ralph Brown became Speaker. Brown was a moderate. He appealed across the board. The liberals bought a committee for liberals out of that Speakership thing, and they preserved it for twenty years. To this day it's been--it's less effective now; these are much more difficult times in some ways. For twenty years, the same argument worked.

You then take that committee and you put the tougher people within the total. Okay. So, you start off with eighty members of the legislature of whom, say, twenty-three are liberals out of, say, forty-three Democrats. The twenty-three have an influence within the forty-three. They then get to pick a committee on which, say, there are eight people of which--Jesse Unruh was the one who first gave me the clear insight about even-numbered committees versus odd committees. An even-numbered committee--say, eight: four will kill. Five to pass; four to kill. Okay?

Rowland: Yes.

Blease: The way you keep things off of it--you ban the four liberals together and then let the Speaker hold the key to the fifth. Right? So, the liberals couldn't put out embarrassing things, but they could keep in embarrassing things. So, we now have eighty; we've reduced it to four.

Rowland: So, you mean they could quash legislation under that method?

Blease: Right, right. We've reduced the entire dynamics from eighty to four. Then you need somebody to assign, and since the speakership runs the assignment business, all the stuff goes there. You broaden the committee's jurisdiction, then you put all the stuff in there, and then the four--you'd add that, and the dynamic of it works. In that way, you could prevail over substantial majorities and do it year in, year out.

Rowland: Did this work also in the senate? How did this work in the senate?

Blease: No, it never really worked in the senate because the Senate Judiciary Committee was larger. The senate never had the leadership to do it and it didn't work the same way.

Rowland: How did the senate work?

Blease: Well, the senate was less--was never as much organized along the party lines, and the liberals were never strong within those groups, and there was never the wherewithal to secure that kind of bastion. There never really was much of an attempt. And there was the Senate Judiciary Committee, which had jurisdiction on not only the criminal matters but the civil matters as well, and it was a very big committee.

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Blease: But you didn't need control in both houses, you know. You only needed it in one house. And there used to be--there always have been games. You put it out of the one house and bury it in the other house.

Rowland: Yes. I have some other questions on specific changes in--

Blease: Let me just tell you one aspect of this.

Rowland: Okay.

Blease: This goes back to Phil Burton and those days--is to understand that what the humanitarian side of things needed to do was to do it the same way Standard Oil did it. By this, I mean--I want to qualify that. When I came up, I immediately noticed that all the committees bore names which were roughly names which identified the interests, the special interests, which had the "in" in a committee. Agriculture was dominated by agriculture interests. At one time there was an Oil, Gas, and Mining Committee dominated by oil, gas, and mining interests. There was a Water Committee dominated by the--[chuckles] What they had all done was to recognize the identical principle I'm just describing here.

I said, "Look, rather than lament and, you know, have this cocktail picture of what we do about it, we'll do the same thing, using a slightly different political dynamic." The same principle works. Then the liberals have an interest in the committee system in the same way that Standard Oil has an interest in the committee system, and then they, by the way, have an interest in preserving the committee as well, including yours. Right?

Rowland: Yes. If you attack one, you have to attack all.

Blease: That's right. And one of the principles which you start off with is that they are better off having their bailiwick; it is terribly helpful to you because they [special interests] don't get out of their bailiwick into your bailiwick.

During one or two years in there, the lobbyist for one of the oil companies also doubled for the American Legion and would try to appear in on loyalty and security things until it was explained to him that maybe some oil and gas legislation was in great difficulty unless he got his ass out of the American Legion business, and he immediately chose the side which paid him, and thereafter the American Legion no longer had any representation.

Now, if you want to know about hardball politics in a world which counts--some people might say, "Gee, that's unfair." Now, maybe it is. In a nicer world with different rules, you would do it a different way, but it's too important. People die for it--live or die by that legislation.

III CHANGING THE LOBBYIST-LEGISLATOR RELATIONSHIP

The End of Cross-filing: A Rise in Partisan Politics

Rowland: In your time, cross-filing was terminated, in '59. I wondered how that affected lobbying and lobbyists.

Blease: Well, it immediately produced Democratic majorities in both houses and the election of Pat Brown.

Rowland: How did that change it?

Blease: Well, it eliminated the dilution of the one side by the other side where they could concentrate. You know, by locking up their side and attacking the other side of the ledger they could, in a sense, almost pre-empt in some districts the politics of it. It essentially watered down the political party lines and emphasized so-called nonpartisan lines. The Republicans have always been nonpartisan; Democrats are partisan.

Rowland: Yes, vote for the man, not for the party.

Blease: Right.

Rowland: You said ending cross-filing watered down the political party [lines]?

Blease: No, no. The other result.

Rowland: Oh, cross-filing had the effect of watering down.

Blease: Right, right.

Rowland: You came in in '57; is that true?

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: There were probably still some of the after-effects of Artie Samish and stories about Artie Samish in there. I was wondering how that affected lobbying and lobbyists. For instance, were there press attacks, press comments on lobbyists' influence, when you came in?

Blease: Oh, sure. As a matter of fact, I was--

Rowland: And press scrutiny, legislative scrutiny?

Blease: Well, not so much legislative scrutiny. There'd been various commissions and the like.

I can remember once being invited down to appear on a television program in Los Angeles. They wanted somebody to come down and talk about lobbying. I didn't really realize [what] the format was until I got down there, and I was sitting there ready to participate, and the introduction was all about Artie Samish and big-money influence in the legislature. They then immediately panned on me, and I spent the first five minutes trying to say that I wasn't one of them and, you know, it was difficult to get out from under that characterization.

Rowland: Representing the Friends Committee--

Blease: Right.

Reapportionment and Third House Relations

Rowland: What about reapportionment? Of course, senate reapportionment occurred in '65, but assembly reapportionment was every ten years. I wonder how that affected--

Blease: Well, I thought that the reapportionment, the constitutional decision to reapportion, was the greatest civil liberties victory in history because it dealt with power.

Rowland: Senate reapportionment?

Blease: Well, that's what it amounted to in California, but it really was much more important in other states in both sides. It was a re-allocation of power by forcing a different method of counting political votes, at least forcing them to count them in ways which would give power to people who didn't have it before, political power, who could then hopefully use it for their interests.

Blease: In California, of course, it ended rural domination of the senate and the agricultural interests' domination of the senate. It really wouldn't be possible--what Cesar Chavez had today would not have been possible without reapportionment, not possible at all.

There were a lot of sides of that. I once had a long debate with George Miller, Jr. about that, and he told me that I was, you know, a misguided idealist. I said, "Well, you know, I may accept some of your arguments for California, but we have to visualize the impact of this constitutionally throughout the country, for Alabama and the impact in the South as well as here. They're great overriding principles."

In a sense, reapportionment in California did some bad things to the senate because some of those rural people were also free of the kind of idiocy that sometimes is visited on urban areas. What they had to do was to tend to agricultural interests, but they could then be free to do other things. They weren't as worried about police problems, and they could act that way. And the Senate Judiciary Committee, up to reapportionment--there was a period in there in which you could do quite respectably because they didn't have to respond to Los Angeles. And that changed with reapportionment. That was one of the unfortunate changes, but you had to look at this in the larger spectrum.

The senate has always been a more difficult place to deal with, in part because there are fewer numbers. It's easier for certain lobbyists to concentrate on forty or twenty--permutations of forty rather than eighty, rather, are easier--and then manipulating a few there. They're all in the same business, about trying to use leverage to gain an influence for their particular issues.

Rowland: But wouldn't reapportionment in favor of urban districts tend to support suburban causes more, and tend to support a suburban backlash when it comes to school integration?

Blease: It does all kinds of things. It produces black senators. It also produces other--you know, it's a mixed bag. All these things result in, in some way, a more cosmopolitan set of influences. Somehow I always thought of the senate as being the bad seed; it always turned out bad no matter what they did with it. [chuckles]

Building a Legislative Staff

Rowland: What about the staff build-up in committees?

Blease: Under Unruh and all that?

Rowland: Under Jesse Unruh. And how that affected--

Blease: Enormously important. As you go to an annual session, as the number of bills increase, as the number of difficult subject matters increase, the need for reliance on people who know increases. You see, that's what I was telling you earlier was the important part of recognition for cause lobbyists. If they could master that end of it, they could have an influence that related to that. With the growth of the staff, in some areas you'll find the staff really are almost the only ones who understand some things.

Last year, before I was appointed to the court, I represented the superintendent of public instruction on some litigation and then later the Serrano litigation. But I got rather heavily into school finance issues, a very complicated area of the law, in which I discovered that there are only four or five people who really had a grasp on this and could command the computer and all the other technical languages to manipulate these things. They included the key staff people on the Senate and Assembly Education Committees, who'd had a great deal of training and experience in this and had been in there during all these legislative in-fights and could explain to you why this clause and that paragraph and this was changed, and why this was pasted over here, and why this was done over here.

And [they] had the commands with the computers now, because the only thing you can--people tell you, really, what you're getting out of it is a computer run on the substance of it. They've got into all kinds of battles, and they went through a thing as to whether they could have a common computer access so that they would know whether one committee was lying to the other committee even though they were using common computer languages. They get into that, because you can see that there are only a few people who can get into that because you literally can't tell how many millions here and how many millions there and what the balance and the shift of it is without computer models and plugging in all of this complicated data into it.

Rowland: But how did staff affect the accessibility of legislators to lobbyists?

Blease: Oh, it affected them both ways. Staff become a subject of lobbying. See, you understand that. Then you also lobby the staff and you sometimes lobby only the staff and let the staff deal with the committee.

There are a lot of things where you do at a distance. If you're a persona non grata or your word may not be accepted if it comes directly from you, it may be accepted if it goes through an intermediary. There are all kinds of intermediaries.

Rowland: That brings up another question. Is there a point at which you might over-lobby an issue?

Blease: Well, I suppose--there are no principles which will tell you in the millions of different cases how to do it. Somebody once wanted me to explain to him all about lobbying. I explained it and within two weeks the guy was fired. I don't know what he did. But, you know, they're not a set of rules which you can go out and apply. They're a set of insights about the process which I consider to be correct, and that if you assiduously do it--but assiduously doing it means going and sitting and reading for endless hours [laughter] and mastering the subject matter.

There is no way--what does that tell you about something? It merely tells you about a way into it. It doesn't tell you whether you're going to be successful or effective, or how people will relate to you, and how you convey all those things.

So, over-lobbying it--I watched for years; people would come up and put petitions down in front of the committee on criminal procedures with a million names on it to pass a bill. We'd kill the bill, four-to-four, [laughter] because those million people weren't in those four people's districts.

Now, later on, with the threat of withdrawal of a bill and a lot of other things, when there's a large public expression, as there was on the death penalty, then even when we had the control over it, those people ultimately gave way. And one of the worst days I ever had was watching the political maneuverings of people with political ambitions in dealing with Deukmejian's death penalty legislation in 1972 or whenever it was. I sat through the--intimately with the whole thing. I sat there with varying drafts. I was prepared to try to subvert it and piece it off. We haven't discussed that, but I'll tell you about how you draft legislation so that it's crazy, doesn't make any sense, and then it will self-destruct. There are a lot of devices like that.

Rowland: How did you do that?

Blease: Well, before they found it out and removed it, I had a piece in one of the determinate sentencing--determinate sentencing legislation. You know, they had this tripartite term--a middle and a lower and an upper. Well, at one point--the way to force the total penalties down and to reduce the number of people getting the upper term--if you've made a judgment that terms are generally too high and you want them to go down, then you want to force it at least toward the middle. What you do is you create a bureaucratic process which makes it more time-consuming to give them the upper rather than the lower.

Blease: See, I knew because I'd studied the judicial council analyses of how long it took to go through these procedures. You would come up with a figure which would be most astounding because people have not spent time to go through the books, and that was that the average entire criminal process for any given individual in the superior court took fifteen minutes. Okay? If you doubled it to a half an hour, what would happen? You either have to double the number of judges who are assigned to do that or you have to reduce the number of cases which give rise to the extra fifteen minutes. So, you build in an extra fifteen-minute time period, just a bureaucratic device. You are just using bureaucracy as a device, knowing the pressures on the courts and the unwillingness to appoint more judges and the time pressures on there, just to see how these things will do it. You place an additional burden on it.

When the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act went through, people who saw the essential insight--and I'm sorry to say it wasn't me who had, you know, the essential view of it, but I soon saw what it was about --was that they saw that everybody who'd attempted to deal with the problem of a commitment of the insane had got it all wrong. They [legislators] attempted to go directly at it and say, "This is wrong to deal with mentally ill this way. The mentally ill have rights. They have a right not to be put away." They found out that that's wrong, that if the issue was posed that way, you would always lose.

So, what they did in California was to say, "Who are all the people who have all the interests in the mental health system? We will buy them all off, and then we will create a procedure which will make it more difficult to go through the commitment process." So, first of all, they bought off the people with the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act. They gave them more money. This was during Reagan's time. Frank Lanterman did this.

They got through to the governor's office. They squelched the state people from making too loud a noise. And they gave the doctors or the people who wanted to take care of the emergency things--they gave them something. We've got the seventy-two-hour hold, and we've got the two-week hold. Right? So, they made it very easy to do the seventy-two-hour thing, harder to do the two-week thing; under the two-week hold, jury trials and other things come in. They're not used. See?

What you do is you create a series of bureaucratic impediments to taking the next step. What you've really done is to essentially abolish long-term legal commitments. They're abolished. That had some undesirable side effects. They would run some people--rather than through long-term commitments, they'd run them into jail, other kinds of systems. (It's difficult to see all the ramifications of a bill.) If you start thinking about how these systems work, you'd understand that's true.

Blease: Now, all that had to be translated into a series of buy-offs, trade-offs, and procedural manipulations. When that legislation went through--you know what happened in the major hearings on that? There was no discussion whatever about the rights of the insane or the mentally ill. [ironic laughter] The debates which occurred in every other state didn't occur at all. They were just devices by which other people with other kinds of interests argued or articulated, and the minute they were all taken care of they kept their mouths shut and no longer made the arguments. [laughter]

Every system runs itself today. You can take the prison systems and every other basic--in a way, they're principles of bureaucracy and aggrandizement and organization. If you understand those things, you can--and if you can command the levers to work on all those pieces--what was accomplished in the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act is that--you want to use an example of how people with humanitarian concerns--or at least have the view that the mentally ill have rights and all--they don't approach it straight out as a matter of fact. Go through that legislation. Use it as an example. There was a lot of hard work to that because there were a lot of complicated provisions of the act, in the history of it. I went through it. But that's how you do the thing. And I learned from that a great--it's a principle that's going to be tried in many, many other areas.

IV WORKING WITH EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS

Personalities in the Governor's Office

- Rowland: I have some questions about specific lobbying with the governor's office. I was wondering, how would you approach the governor on key issues?
- Blease: Well, the governor directly? Largely, you don't. Because his time is so taken up, you have to deal with his people. In Pat Brown's term, I knew people who represented the governor.
- Rowland: Who did you work with most closely in Brown's office?
- Blease: Well, I don't know that I worked--I dealt with everybody down there.
- Rowland: Any key people that--?
- Blease: Yes. Almost, as a matter of fact, all of the people who got involved in the policy-making or the lobbying end of things.
- Rowland: Frank Mesplé?
- Blease: Yes.
- Rowland: Paul Ward?
- Blease: Not so much Paul Ward because he was working with the senate. And then Winslow Christian was, I guess, chief of his staff. I think of other people who have gone off to greener pastures.
- Rowland: Hale Champion?
- Blease: Hale Champion, a little bit. He was mostly in the financing end of it, and we were in the non-money end of it, which made some things easier for the most part.

Rowland: Yes. How did you find working with particularly those who were the legislative secretaries to Governor Brown?

Blease: Well, first of all--

Rowland: Julian Beck, I guess, would be the first.

Blease: I never talked with Julian Beck at all.

Rowland: Alexander Pope?

Blease: Well, you see, on that side of the street you always had access. I had a period of eight years when I didn't get in the governor's office, when Reagan was in. And when Jerry Brown came in, the doors opened and I walked through. It was just the difference between day and night. One day, they were--although I knew the people down there. I dealt with a lot of them in the Reagan administration. I knew them all--well, or most of them. I knew them because they would sit in committees, the ones who dealt with legislators. They would run across your path, and they were interested in a lot of the same subjects you were interested in. So, you would come to deal with them and end up discussing these common subject matters.

But, you see, it all revolves around issues. You know, the key to the whole thing is that--and from my end of it, I think it's safe to say that I largely didn't have any friendships.

Rowland: In the governor's--?

Blease: Anywhere up there. I didn't believe in it. You know why? Because I was always prepared to run them through, anybody and everybody.

Rowland: Run them through? What do you mean by that?

Blease: Double cross them, subvert their legislation, move it somewhere else. If they're your friend, it's a little difficult to do that. I talked about being co-opted. You're co-opted a lot of times. You're co-opted by personal relationships. It's a bit more difficult to punch somebody out. I'm using metaphors here, but I mean it seriously in the sense of one's focus. You have to have an instinct for the jugular. You can have no impediments to that, because the issues are too serious to count; and what has to be done, you do it. You don't want to hesitate. The critical judgments that have to be made have to be made, and now. Don't sit around agonizing and have friendships and other people interfering. You've got to go and do it. I lost friends over issues, and I gained friends over issues, you know, in that sense. But I always had a very reserved sense in which it was absolutely clear to me almost at the beginning what was uppermost.

Blease: The poor and the helpless people in jail had no friends there, and they weren't my friends either. That's another thing. The difference between empathy and sympathy is a world of difference. And I think if movements want to have prison people psychologically tested, that's not civil liberties. The civil libertarian and the movement person are two entirely different people. They have two radically different perspectives on the world, and they will have two radically different kinds of conclusions in this field. I think we need more civil libertarians--or we probably need both of them.

But, you see, that kind of an understanding of what happens to you psychologically in the process of co-optation is important as well. It's a task to be done. At the same time, you accept the parameters of the system. I mean, you know, there are all these things, and if you want to discuss things about honesty and who you tell things to, we can discuss all of this. The principles that you operate on--essentially, the principles of the golden rule operate in most institutions, including political ones. You can't become a person who's known for not keeping his word; that doesn't work.

Assessing the Assembly Speakers

Rowland: Before we run out of tape there, I want to try to get some of your comments and observations on certain personalities in the legislature --the character, style, or motivations of both senate and assembly leaders, principal committee members that you've probably worked with, and governor's staff people. First of all, on the assembly side, the three leaders that you worked with in the Knight-Brown period would be--Luther Lincoln, first of all. How would you characterize his motivations and style?

Blease: Luther Lincoln was a moderate, if not a liberal, Republican within that context. He lived in an era of more, you know, bipartisanship. He was rather easy to talk to, in a sense, for somebody coming from the position that I did. My recollection is that he was somewhat less in the grasp of the larger lobbyists. As a matter of fact, when--

Rowland: Less of a grasp of the larger--?

Blease: In less of the grasp. In fact, when Lester McMillan was carrying anti-death-penalty legislation for the Friends, Luther Lincoln called us and asked us what in the hell we were doing because, you know, he [McMillan] was viewed as being close to certain special

Blease: interests. I told him I didn't give a damn; he was the only person who would do it, and I really wasn't concerned with that. And he had a genuine interest in the issue, and that's all I asked. He wasn't fooling around with it. He felt deeply about it and was willing to do something. And that was Lester. I didn't ask all those other questions. In some larger spectrum, in a better world, maybe you'd ask and answer all these. But Lincoln felt it important to at least warn us, but he didn't have to warn us. I already knew about it and didn't care.

Rowland: What about Ralph Brown?

Blease: Ralph Brown was, I guess--was he Lincoln's successor?

Rowland: Yes.

Blease: At least he came in then with the 1958 sweep of the Democrats. He was a moderate. He is, curiously enough, responsible for having the most objectionable piece of the obscenity legislation in the books, the one with "without redeeming social importance" language in it and that which has been attacked by everybody as being the insidious thing which keeps them from not prosecuting pornographic literature. It's in there because of Ralph Brown. Really, it's in there because I influenced Ralph Brown to put it in, and when one of his staff people inadvertently took some of it out, I went and had a long discussion about what it meant to keep a deal. He carried through his deal. It required almost locking up the legislature to do it, but he carried it out, because I was furious when I discovered it.

Rowland: What was the deal?

Blease: The deal was that for him to get the legislation out of the Criminal Procedure Committee, he would accept certain amendments, and I got it out of the committee for him. I essentially recognized that we couldn't hold the dam on the no obscenity legislation thing or no change in the existing law and maybe it wasn't even desirable. The best thing we could do would be to run a set of first amendment principles in the law that would be a change in the law. As a matter of fact, what we did was to run in principles in the law which became later the federal constitutional law. They were in the California statutes before they really appeared as substantive constitutional law. But Ralph--that was the agreement. In fact, that was the one difference I had with Phil Burton. He thought I'd made a bad political judgment. History has proven me to be right with respect to that particular legislation.

But I saw it was important. We had to do it now, and we had a time to do it, and we had somebody who would carry it, who was a moderate. And so we had an opportunity to, in a sense, what I call,

- Blease: run piggyback. We ran a lot of legislation piggyback. I ran it on the backs of other legislation. I ran it through, and people used to say, "Who carries your bill?" I'd say, "A lot of people. And they don't even know. They just carry our legislation. We run it on the piggyback, or on their legislation."
- Rowland: How would that work?
- Blease: Their bill comes along and affects Section A, and you make some modest adjustments to Section A.1. One year, in the loyalty oath--
- Rowland: You mean the Levering Act?
- Blease: Yes. I repealed it by a piece of legislation that came through that added a loyalty oath for persons who had run as candidates for office but lost. You see, up to that point, they only took the loyalty oath if they'd won, and somebody thought this was terrible not to have loyal candidates. [laughter] And I said, "This is an extension of the absurdity in the whole process." So, they added that, and I subtracted all the others.
- Rowland: Did you draft the amendment that subtracted all those?
- Blease: Yes. So, then it applied only to candidates.
- Rowland: No one examined what sections would be removed?
- Blease: Well, nobody saw it. It turned on the specific language which was in the Garner case, [Garner vs. Board of Public Works, 341 U.S. 716] which was a leading loyalty oath decision. I just picked it all up and redefined the scope of its application. See, the reason for doing it was that you then should not have to take another oath if you took it as a candidate. One shouldn't have to take a second oath. They agreed to that principle. So, in the process of achieving that result--that is, of not having to take it a second time as a legislator, as an elected official--they didn't have to take it a first time as anybody else, by the use of the appropriate definition, which was the Garner case. It looked like it merely applied to legislators, but it was in fact the definition out of the Garner case applied to everybody else.
- Rowland: Wouldn't that be a court interpretation?
- Blease: Sure, it would require--I wrote the legislative history and anchored it in the committees and along the line and put it in various places to be used later. We didn't have to use it because Whitehill versus Elkins [1966] came down from the U.S. Supreme Court and invalidated loyalty oaths.

Rowland: When did you do all this?

Blease: Oh, in the early '60s, somewhere in there.

Rowland: During Pat Brown's [administration]?

Blease: Yes. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I had to persuade him to sign it. He thought it was bad to sign an additional loyalty oath.
[chuckles]

Rowland: He didn't know what you had done?

Blease: No. I had explained it to Winslow Christian. Well, I had to explain it, in fact--explain it to key people. You had to tell, in the process, key people. I told [Jesse] Unruh. I told the governor's people. I told certain key people along the line because otherwise the consequences of your opponents finding out--you're really screwed, let me tell you. So, what you do is you tell the key people who--

Rowland: You have to tell the truth, then.

Blease: You have to tell the truth to some people. You don't have to tell it--you know, you can keep your mouth shut as to a lot of other people. And I always followed the policy: if anybody asked, I would tell them, but they had to figure it out first. Those are common principles for lawyers generally. But I had no obligation to go and explain all these things to people, or all the ramifications of it, and if you didn't ask--mostly people didn't ask because they didn't think about it. It never occurred to them.[chuckles] But that's a--

Rowland: Well, why don't we jump over to Jesse Unruh.

Blease: Yes, yes. Well, Unruh, you know, was the master of it.

Rowland: He's probably the most colorful person in the Brown era.

Blease: Well, more than colorful, because he understood--he's a dynamic leader, very forceful. He understood the relationship of the pieces. He understood very clearly what they were about.

##

Rowland: I think a lot of people would ask, what makes Jesse Unruh tick, or what were his motivations?

Blease: Well, you know, like anybody who is--and he's a complicated person, like anybody who comes from his background and makes it up in a tough world of power, comes from nothing, you know, poor white folks

Blease: in Texas to the most powerful person in the California legislature, through talent, ability. You know, who isn't complicated who has achieved anything in this world? It's not a simple world.

Rowland: How did you work with Unruh?

Blease: Mostly not at all. You dealt with people who had the primary interest in some of these things, and they went and made the case for you mostly. I talked to him a little bit here, and I did talk to him fairly extensively about reapportionment and going through and explaining the consequences for his power of reapportionment and the opportunity that he might have to control the senate. I had a series of arguments explaining what would happen politically.

Rowland: What was his position on that?

Blease: Oh, he wanted more power.

Rowland: To control the senate?

Blease: Well, to control--yes. To control legislation. He saw that--I don't know that any of the things were novel, and he probably understood all those things anyway, but the--

Rowland: Did he have ambitions for becoming a senator?

Blease: No!

Rowland: He still wanted to--?

Blease: Oh, sure. He had ambitions for becoming governor, obviously. But, you know, there was always this enmity between the two houses, and he had difficulties in the senate. He wanted to ease them.

Rowland: What did you discuss with him about the reapportionment and his trying to control legislation?

Blease: Well, it was dealing with the Dirksen amendment and why California ought not to pass it, and the critical role that California played in the national scene, and something about the politics of reapportionment power, most of the things that I'm sure he was well aware of.

Rowland: Was Unruh considering running a group of assemblymen for the vacant senate seats?

Blease: Among other things, sure. He understood that the natural candidates for a lot of these new seats--you're going to go from one senator in L.A. to--what?

Rowland: Fourteen.

Blease: Fourteen, was it? Right?

Rowland: Yes, and one senator shared with Orange County.

Blease: Sure. Well, it's going to be his people; send them over there. And now you don't have to deal with those cow county people who have absolutely no allegiance to Unruh, you know, and have totally different political constituencies, most of them, and react differently.

I mean, it turned out to be wrong. The minute Unruh's assemblymen went over there [laughter], they no longer had any allegiance to him, but that's another political insight.

But that's the way you approach it. See, you approach it really honestly for what it is. You don't make it into something else, and you don't moralize about it. I never moralized about that. I moralize about moral issues. Underlying all of this [is] a strong moral thing. Obviously, the essential insight about why you want to do anything of these things is a moral insight. [interruption due to persons entering office]

Rowland: Oh, we're ready to wrap up here?

Blease: Yes, why don't we wrap it up.

Working with Senators

Rowland: Okay. [tape off briefly] I was wondering how you perceived Hugh Burns--what kind of character and style and motivations and priorities, all of that.

Blease: Well, as a broker, mostly. He enjoyed the exercise of brokering power, enjoyed it enormously, was very skillful at it, and would broker power for all kinds of people, and did it for us from time to time.

Rowland: So, you had a working relationship with Hugh Burns?

Blease: No, I had no working relationship with him. Other people did. George Miller.

Rowland: Yes. Did you have any contact with Burns?

Blease: No, no.

Rowland: He was an outsider and an opponent to your group?

Blease: Well, you know, there's a huge time problem. Some people you relate to, and some people you don't. It's just a lot easier to deal with a few people. There are so damn many issues. Part of the problem is corralling the whole process. When I left the American Civil Liberties Union, they were following, I guess, a thousand bills. There's a problem of managing this that's enormously complicated. The fewer people you can handle and deal with, the easier you are. If you have a large lobbying operation, you can spread it out and try to reach everybody around, you know, try to reach other people on the floor and the rest of it. But I saw no particular advantage in spreading the net any further than I had to. And [it was] really a very small number of people that mostly I dealt with and dealt with them fairly extensively, and I never called on anybody to go to the well unless they had to. I never asked anybody to put themselves in any embarrassing political--

Rowland: To the well?

Blease: Go to the well. That is, to subject themselves to political attack, to do something which might be difficult. [I] always refrained from that, never asked anybody to do anything unless it was at that critical moment, except for a few people who were your natural allies and essential for the way in which you operated altogether. But there were those occasions when it was critical, and you then asked people to do things.

George Miller once told me right out that he would do something for me a couple of times a year. He was a very candid man. And partly--he said, "I'm going to do it for you because I win so much out here that other people need to defeat me once in a while. So, I'll take on one of your civil liberties issues, or whatever." Well, as a matter of fact, we mostly won them, you see, but that's the way he was about it. He would treat it that way even when he was dealing --you're appealing to his conscience. But, you see, his conscience had only so much--there was only so much room in it in the middle of all these other issues--I mean, that you saw. There were grandiose other issues that were earth-shaking and important as well.

Rowland: I've got some other senators here. The senate is kind of the house I'm particularly interested in because I did my thesis on the Burns Committee on un-American activities. I talked to quite a few senators. But Senator Collier--I wondered if you had any contact and would be able to describe his character, personality, how he worked in the senate.

Blease: Yes. Well, you know, he was another Hugh Burns, a person of enormous influence and, you know, dynamic, not to mention the least of his qualities. I understand he has two children that are only three or four years old now [chuckles]; he's on his third family or something, and he must be pushing eighty.

Rowland: [laughter] That's like Senator Teale, Steve Teale.

Blease: But Collier exercised a lot of power, enjoyed it, and was enormously good at it. I dealt with him. Well, he carried the implied consent law dealing with drunk driving and all that, and we pushed him all the way down to the wire and caused them a considerable amount of grief and amended it before it was through. So, see, he's a person who appreciates somebody who does something. You know, you get somebody's attention when you do something to them or to their legislation. Then they take notice. If you can't do anything, you might as well just keep your mouth shut and go on your way. I believe in revealed truth; it's an ancient religious notion. But in this world it will become apparent to people after a while what it is that you have done or can do, and at that point the influence that you have there is much greater. You can't go around blowing your own horn and claiming false claims. People won't believe you.

Rowland: We have Hugh Donnelly of Turlock County.

Blease: I never really dealt much with him. I just treated him as one of those intractable conservatives and didn't do much with him.

Rowland: Luther Gibson, chairman of the notorious GE [Governmental Efficiency] Committee.

Blease: I didn't deal much with him either; in fact, not at all.

Rowland: And Stephen Teale. Would you like to describe him?

Blease: Well, yes. Teale was another very able person, but with some social concerns, a great friend of George Miller's and a few others. You know, he was the kind of person--see, when something was going, Miller would have Teale's votes. If you talked to Miller, you talked to Teale. There were a lot of reasons why you didn't have to go around talking to all the people. [chuckles] If you talked to one person, you talked to a lot of people. If they're going to do something about it, they will then do it. So, I never had too many dealings with Stephen Teale directly.

Rowland: Now, you talk about George Miller as being kind of a pivot for you and your group in the senate.

Blease: Yes.

- Rowland: I wonder if you could go into George Miller. I'm on the verge of trying to launch a George Miller, Jr. memorial project because he was one of the more intriguing senators.
- Blease: Oh, George is one of the all-time greats around the legislature. You know, I would put him in there; after Phil Burton and some others, George Miller would be right there at the top.
- Rowland: You have some George Miller stories, I would bet.
- Blease: Well, I'll tell you one of the earliest ones. Almost from the first I got up there, which--in '57--who was it? The old fellow from Hemet who had--
- Rowland: Oh, Nelson Dilworth.
- Blease: Nelson Dilworth had some loyalty legislation.
- Rowland: That was the Dilworth Act?
- Blease: No, it wasn't. The Dilworth Act had already occurred, but he had something else, and it went through to a senate committee. I think it was probably the Senate Education Committee. I went and assessed the votes, and I went to Miller and said, "Look, I think we're one vote shy of winning this thing in this committee. If you had one more vote, or if somebody doesn't show up, we could defeat this Dilworth thing." So, he said, "What do you want me to do, hit somebody in the head?" I said, "Look, I don't even know what you do around here. I'm just explaining to you the problem." Well, when I went to the committee and Dilworth got up and his legislation was defeated, there was one person missing. So, I went back to George and I said, "Jesus, how did you do that?" He said, "It was an act of God." You know, he went and talked to somebody and said, "Look, this is no skin off your nose. Just be missing," and so on.

It happens a lot around there, because, you know, an absent vote's a no vote, and if you need an absolute majority--[laughter] And somebody's gone for a lot of reasons. . . But there are a lot of things like that. But that was one of my first early encounters in politics.

- Rowland: How did you first come in contact with George Miller?
- Blease: Oh, I suppose somebody introduced me. I don't know whether Nancy Jewell did, or somebody who'd been up here around and went around and introduced me to people who would be friendly. There weren't too many, you know. So, I was introduced--

Rowland: And he had a natural concern for civil liberties?

Blease: Oh, well, yes. But you've heard of the Miller-Coffey machine. You know Bert Coffey?

Rowland: Yes, right.

Blease: Well, Bert Coffey was very close to him.

Rowland: But also Al Shults was, of Standard Oil.

Blease: That's right. That's oil.

Rowland: What was that relationship?

Blease: Friendship, plus it's in his district; it's an economic interest in his district.

But Bert Coffey was in a lot of concerns about civil liberties and other social issues, and very close to George Miller. After the reapportionment thing, Coffey was so mad at me because of the positions that I'd taken on it that he told me he wasn't going to talk to me for a year.

Rowland: The senate reapportionment thing that we talked about?

Blease: Yes. And he did; he wouldn't talk to me for exactly one year, and then he would talk to me. [laughter]

Rowland: [laughter] Maybe we should cut off here, because I've got a whole list of assembly committee members that I want to ask you about, and a whole bunch of Knight people, and that will take a long time.

Blease: Yes.

[Interview 2: September 11, 1979]##

Blease: Lobbying is stylized: take the appointment of committees. It's the arrangement of--you know, you have a given number of ways you can do it [appoint members to a committee]. If you have only so many lawyers, and the lawyers go on the Criminal Justice Committee, or most of them, then you know out from the group of lawyers how many do you get [to support you]. It really reduces it very quickly from fifteen or twenty or twenty-five down to ten or five or six or seven candidates, very quickly. Very quickly, you're from eighty down to five. Just [claps hands briskly] like that. It doesn't take any

Blease: time. So, don't waste your time. Don't waste your time with the seventy-five. Deal with the five; those are the people you want on. And get your people to move it [legislation]. You go in there and make the political, internal arguments for bringing legislation about.

Then you go in the middle game, which is the legislative session. That's all the larger, open-field running, creative thing. The permutations and combinations are never the same; they're always changing--novelty beyond belief, opportunities that are always incredible. It's like a baseball game. Do you bunt, or do you go for the fence? Those are always relevant tactical options. And a lot of times--I believe that when--people never knew what you would do. I wouldn't tell anybody really; I told almost nobody what I'd do, except a few people to bring it about. And the fewer people who knew about it, the better off we were. We had absolutely nothing to gain, because when you occupy an unpopular position, letting other people know about it is just making yourself a target. But sometimes you'd absolutely go for the fence. That is, it would be beyond somebody else's conception that you would even attempt to do it.

And I found out, in the middle of all this, something which is obvious. Well, maybe it's not so obvious. It's the subject of schools of philosophical thought. Ludwig Wittgenstein says (and, I think, absolutely correct) that the key to understanding logic or the key to understanding anything is through language, and the key to language is through forms of life, and that language and logic therefore never transcend forms of life. If the forms of life are different, the language will be different and the logic will be different. And therefore there is no such thing as logic; there are only logics. Those logics are dependent intrinsically, inevitably, with the form of life which you occupy, and that form of life depends upon things which can occur to you, and they can only occur to you because you've been through them, and they will naturally occur to you by virtue of your life, your training, or your education. It can be a very sophisticated view.

If you don't have that view of it, if you don't have the form of life, the background to understand it, you will not. And you can take language which will appeal to different forms of life, different perspectives, and you can use that language with absolute confidence that people who haven't shared your form of life will not understand it. And I could do it with impunity. Your language will not be understood by other people who haven't shared your perspective. It won't be understood. As a matter of fact, it's impossible, in some very fundamental way, until they're brought around to share those values, those perspectives, those forms of life, to understand it. Once when Captain Barnes of San Diego was pushing obscenity legislation we had-- He had a bill in to remove the "utterly without redeeming

Blease: social importance" language from the California obscenity law which was put in there in 1961. I think I've described that. And I went around to him and told him that if he did that under the current state of the law that I believed it would render the legislation unconstitutional and California would be left without any obscenity law and that he would have brought about something which he would not go down in history for, which would be to create a flood of pornographic literature on every corner because there would be no statute; it would be unregulated until the legislature could meet and do the constitutional thing. But he told me that I was a liar and that the people who represented ACLU positions were always lying about the constitution and, therefore, my argument was not to be believed.

So, I put a proposal to him. I said, "I will support a bill which removes 'utterly without redeeming social importance,' if you want to have a little test of what you've just said, and the bill will have three parts. Part one will remove 'utterly without redeeming social importance.' Part two says that if as a consequence of part one the legislation is rendered unconstitutional, then part three will go into effect, which will be a new law. The only thing I ask is that I write part three."

He was taken aback by this. You know, it was a challenge, a direct challenge to his whole stereotype. And I said, "Look, if you are right and I am a liar or wrong about the law, you have nothing to fear because part two will never go into effect, part three will never become the law, and you will achieve your goal with the full support of the ACLU."

Well, I'm not sure I could bring it about because members of the Criminal Justice Committee thought this was beyond belief [laughter] that people would engage in that kind of tactical manipulation. Anyway, he went down to other people who said, "You'd better back off that because the risks are too great," and he never did ever again challenge me that I was a liar, and he was forced to alter his view. But, see, his perspective made it difficult to view somebody having a different set of values as having an honest position about it which ought to be evaluated even from his own self-interest. That requires that perspective, by the way, which ought to be intrinsic. The civil liberties view intrinsically recognizes there's another point of view. It has to. That's essential to it. And, moreover, if you practice swimming upstream or the other arts which go into constitutional litigation, you'll always understand that there are very able people on the other side, and it will always be forcibly brought home to you that there's another position, and you'd better very well evaluate that position because that's the one that you have to contend with.

- Blease: Anyway, so that's a form of life which admits of other forms of life. It, in fact, impresses upon you the necessity of doing that. And if that view could gain hold in the world, then our ability to tolerate other differing opinions would be vastly improved.
- Rowland: Getting on with the list of people here, I have a whole list of governor's office staff, which--I'll maybe just throw out some individuals who actually worked with the legislature. I'm really curious about the role of Paul Mason in the Knight [administration] and wonder if you had any communication with Paul Mason at all.
- Blease: No. None. I didn't work with Paul.
- Rowland: Anyone on the Knight staff that you might have worked with?
- Blease: The Knight staff?
- Rowland: Howard Schmidt? This is in '57.
- Blease: No, no.
- Rowland: John Synon? Do any of those people ring a bell? [hands over list of names]
- Blease: No, no.
- Rowland: The Brown staff--the legislative secretaries began with Julian Beck.
- Blease: I never dealt with him. He was on financial matters, I think, largely.
- Rowland: Alexander Pope, who became briefly--
- Blease: Alex Pope, yes.
- Rowland: And I understand now he works down in Los Angeles as a lawyer.
- Blease: He's a lawyer, a very bright and able young man. Maybe he's not so young any more. He's about my age. [laughter]
- Rowland: Paul Ward.
- Blease: Paul Ward, yes, I dealt with somewhat, although I think Paul largely dealt with--what?--welfare and those kinds of matters. Or did he? I don't know whether he limited himself to that. He certainly gravitated to that field. He used to represent one of the hospital associations.

Rowland: I think now he's working as a lobbyist, is he not?

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: I believe he is. The last one, I believe, is--Paul Ward worked for quite a few sessions, and then came Frank Mesplé in the last two years.

Blease: Yes. Well, Frank is a--what do you call it?--a journeyman politician and knows a great deal about it and knows what it's about.

Assessing the Third House

Rowland: I also have a list of lobbyists, many of them very well known around here, and some of them are actually still working. If we could just run through this quickly, and if any of these people you particularly remember having stories about or any particular comments on--Elmer Bromley. He was the PG&E--

Blease: Don't know him.

Rowland: Monroe Butler, for Superior Oil.

Blease: Well, I knew about Monroe Butler. He was an old oil baron when Superior Oil or the Keck family or whatever was a big influence in the legislature.

Rowland: Yes. And Joe Shell was an influence up there too.

Blease: Joe Shell I know a little bit more. He was an assemblyman and very conservative. I believe [he] ran against Richard Nixon, didn't he, when Nixon ran for governor in 1962.

Rowland: Yes. In '62. Right. Let's see. I have Richard Carpenter, for the League of California Cities.

Blease: Yes. Well, Bud Carpenter is one of the oldest, most respected lobbyists around the legislature, and I'm very fond of him. In part, he's been a very big supporter of mine, but I dealt with him a lot when the pre-emption and other matters of constitutional change involving local government were at issue. I did a lot of work on that and wrote a major Law Review--I think I've mentioned that before, about gaining a foothold in that field.

Blease: But as a result of all that, I came into a great deal of contact with the League of California Cities, county supervisors people, local government people under them, and on a very detailed basis in dealing with the substance of the legislation. As a matter of fact, most all my dealings--the amount of socializing I did was almost zero, not very important to do, not for me. So, we really dealt with issues. I dealt with people on substantive matters.

Rowland: Dan Creedon.

Blease: No, I don't--

Rowland: He was a former assemblyman, I believe, and represented liquor interests and others.

Blease: Yes. No, I never dealt with him much at all.

Rowland: Nils Eklund, for Kaiser.

Blease: No.

Rowland: John Foran, who now is interesting, made a transition from a lobbyist to a legislator.

Blease: I don't think I dealt with John when he was a lobbyist. I did when he was a legislator.

Rowland: Let's see. James Garibaldi, who is now still--

Blease: I never dealt with him.

Rowland: Gordon Garland, who represented the Golden Gate Bridge District and water associations?

Blease: I never dealt with Gordon Garland.

Rowland: Neil Haggerty and Harry Finks.

Blease: Well, I tried to deal with him [Haggerty]. He was an arrogant son of a bitch. In the first meetings with him representing the Friends, [we] entered a room and he sat with his back to us and never turned around. I don't know that he actually spoke to us.

Rowland: Why did he treat you that way?

Blease: I don't know. You understand the dynamic of poor people who get power? He was a hard-nosed soul. I can understand it. Maybe some of his views I probably share today about do-gooders and those people. I've told you I don't like do-gooders, mainly because of those things

Blease: which I associate with do-gooders: people who are not realists about the political end of it, and they're not therefore successful with it. And if you see success as important, then you'll get a much harder-nosed view of it.

As a matter of fact, Harry Finks, who was a lobbyist for the state labor federation, still is to this day. I don't recall Harry ever speaking to me until I was appointed to the court of appeal. [chuckles] I'd probably only seen him in the halls a couple of thousand times.

Rowland: [chuckles] Strange.

Blease: And even during periods when I represented labor organizations. They were always, I guess, on the fringe of the labor movement. Haggerty was gone, you know, very shortly. I don't know when he left.

Rowland: I'm not sure either.

Blease: About '60 or so, when he went to Washington.

Rowland: Yes. Vincent Kennedy, for the retailers association, do you recall him?

Blease: Only just in passing.

Rowland: Bob McKay and Bill Barton, for the CTA.

Blease: Yes. Well, Bob McKay was a big power in the CTA for many, many years. [He] ultimately suffered some major defeats and was driven out, as I understand it. I wasn't too close to it. Those people who were always on the wrong side of--

Rowland: By the Fisher Act battle in the senate?

Blease: It could have been. I don't recall.

Rowland: In '61.

Blease: Yes, I think maybe Hugo drove them out. Now it's coming back to me.

Rowland: Hugo Fisher?

Blease: Hugo Fisher. Now I recall the story, for whatever its truth is, that he caught McKay in a lie, and the rest of them really rammed it to McKay. McKay never recovered.

Rowland: Fisher was chairman of the legislative representation committee.

Blease: Oh, was he? Yes.

Rowland: He got a hold of the CTA's expenditure reports and discovered that McKay had apparently--

Blease: Is that what happened?

Rowland: Yes, I believe.

Blease: Now I recall somewhat about that. Hugo is a really tough son of a bitch and was capable of shoving it to people. Yes, I think something like that happened. But McKay was always a big manipulator with the teachers and had no interest in education, near as I could tell. But that's, of course, not very important. He was representing the economic interests of teachers.

Rowland: Running through quickly here, we have Ben Read, for the CMA. The Public Health League--

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: There was an episode in which Ben Read was having lunch with the Rumford public health committee for quite a few sessions.

Blease: Oh, yes. He used to regularly have that.

Rowland: I gave you an article from the Sacramento Newsletter about that. I wondered if that jogged any memories that you had.

Blease: Yes. No, I do recall it now. Sure. They ran the public health committee.

Rowland: They did?

Blease: Yes. Of course, we did the same thing with the Criminal Procedure Committee.

Rowland: [laughter] Did he operate in the same manner as you did?

Blease: No. He could afford lunches. We couldn't afford to buy any lunch. But meeting with them--we did that.

Rowland: [laughter] Kent Redwine, of the motion picture industry and the motorcar dealers.

Blease: Yes. I didn't have much to do with him. Well, maybe on a--there might have been a censorship issue, one or two in there. I now do recall. Some of the obscenity legislation might have been reviewed as lapsing over into the movie area.

Rowland: How did he operate, and how was he to work with?

Blease: The same way all those people operate. You know, they get very close to some legislators and work them very hard and expand their influence, as I imagine, you know. Of course, I never attended any of their dinners and was never part of any of their meetings. I only have to speculate about it. They spent time with people, they shared ups and downs, and they represent an important industry. I suppose he probably had the people from Hollywood meet with them. Anybody's ego is going to be massaged by being able to sit down and eat dinner with somebody who's on the screen.

You see, you're not going to be a legislator unless you have, for the most part, a weak ego. I mean, you must like public adulation, which is the only thing I've ever seen as the common element of these people. You like to have your ego massaged. Why else would you run for one of those damn things, expose yourself to breach of privacy, and have to work hard night and day and odd hours and not be paid very well for it? You have to have a character defect. That's the way I viewed it. The legislators--the only one thing--and they all do, I guarantee you that--every one of them has a character defect who seeks public office because he wants to have public approbation of him personally.

A lobbyist can massage that ego. What happens to people, and it's often thought--legislators are treated like everybody ought to be treated. See, they're treated with respect, and they're treated decently, and they're treated (no matter how idiotic their opinions) [chuckles] as if they're worth something. At least, you know, you can listen to them. Most people are unprepared for that; they grow up not having been prepared. It's like always being poor and all of a sudden getting a lot of money. You have very little experience about how to manipulate money, or to treat money as a subject rather than merely something you can get by on, and the same thing is true with legislators' egos. You have to understand the dynamic of the legislator in general, his dynamic and his weaknesses, and I think a lot of these lobbyists play on those people's weaknesses. They play on their wanting to be identified with people of importance. This is why, entirely apart from whether or not they receive a campaign contribution necessarily--that's important in terms of the mechanics of getting re-elected, but a lot of this would happen entirely without that. And a lot of those lobbyists would have influence entirely without regard to any campaign contribution, as witness the fact that a lot of them have a great influence from organizations who never

Blease: contribute any money. The League of California Cities, for example, doesn't contribute money to anybody. Lots of other organizations, government lobbying organizations, contribute nothing to anybody, but they're very successful in their own bailiwick, and they manipulate their power and influence the cities, city boards and councils and boards of supervisors and things like that. But they also--you can lend importance to these people, which is what they crave, and they will then reward you with a vote.

Rowland: Just running through this quickly--I only have three left. Russell Richards, of the Cal Farm Bureau.

Blease: I don't know him.

Rowland: Al Shults, of course, from--

Blease: Yes, I know of him, you know. I know him to talk to; that's all.

Rowland: Bert Trask, of the truckers.

Blease: Of the truckers. That's all I know of him.

V RECALLING KEY ISSUES, 1957-1966

Criminal Law and the Cahan and Priestly Decisions

Rowland: There are, I think, about five or six major issues, beginning with civil liberties, basically dealing with the Cahan and Priestly decisions and how you worked with that. I think that's one of your specialties that you told me over the phone. First, on the subject of criminal law, what was the background to the Cahan and Priestly decisions, and what motivated the supreme court to make those decisions?

Blease: An outrageous circumstance of police lawlessness. The police as an agency have more discretion day to day than any other institution of our government. That is, their power to affect people's lives is enormous. And if it is unregulated it is lawless in two senses: one, because there is no law, and therefore it is lawless; there is no guide to the exercise of discretion. That requires law or rules, principles by which to be guided. And the other is lawlessness in the sense that there isn't any organizational structure which limits the exercise of that power as a managerial matter or a bureaucratic matter. And both of those are still, in my view, major issues with respect to the--

Rowland: Who is Cahan and who is Priestly?

Blease: They were criminals. The Cahan case [People vs. Cahan 44 Cal 2nd 434 (1955)] had to do with exclusionary rule, and the Priestly case [Priestly vs. Superior Court 50 Cal 2nd 812 (1958)] had to do with informers. The Cahan case established in California a judge-made law, common law: the right to exclude evidence which was seized in violation of the federal constitution.

Now, the most important thing about Cahan, and subsequent rulings in the exclusionary rule cases, is that they dealt with one aspect of the notion of lawlessness; that is, they created law. Prior to Cahan, there was no law. There were maybe a couple of other cases before 1955, which was the date of the Cahan case, which said,

Blease: "Here's what the fourth amendment means." But you need the occasion to create a body of law, or you don't have any. You could not today codify the federal constitution. There are too many hundreds of thousands of decisions. It's in the core of those decisions that the law lies. You couldn't set it all out as a body of written rules. You could try, but it would become very extensive.

We just had a constitution which just says that it's an unreasonable search and seizure, without knowing what that meant. Those are not self-defining terms. They need hundreds of examples to put flesh on those bare bones, so that Cahan, by creating the opportunity to have judges review individual factual circumstances, they then created the opportunity to make the law. Cahan made the law. There was no law before that. I'm overdrawing this a bit, but to make the point, which I think is absolutely the most important point about it. It is [that] before Cahan there was no fourth amendment; it didn't make any difference.

And here we're not talking about how the rules should work out; we're talking about whether you have any rules. And one of the reasons, one of the things, the continuing battle that comes up in cases all the time--it is over police discretion. It is over whether or not they should have rules and how those rules should be furnished. That's what Cahan--Priestly is just another aspect of it, not as important as Cahan-- It's just the question of the police tactics, the use of informers, and whether [there should be] some check on the use of untested informers and the like.

You know, we have many, many more rules in this area. That's really the critical part of it. We're a long way from it, and one of the things which is--we have police which are much less lawless today because they adhere much more to a set of rules and there is a body of rules for them to adhere to. But we need--the next whole step of that is for an internal regulation of themselves, internal rules that are enforced by police bureaucracy. In that we are lacking, and we need that. We need a self-regulating system, and internal body of rules that governs and inhibits discretion, and people are trained to live up to this, because it's like training to be a lawyer. You're trained to follow rules rather than your own predilections. You're trained to view even your own values in the light of a set of rules, and that limits your own discretion. It creates a kind of objectivity that makes for being law-abiding in that sense, and every governmental institution needs to be circumscribed in that way. The police have the power to deprive people of their privacy in major ways, and therefore the impact on people's lives is dramatic, that the need for it is more apparent. We need it in other areas as well, but there we really do.

- Rowland: Getting back to the decisions, I wonder if you might shed some light on the role of Attorney General Brown in supporting enforcement of the decisions.
- Blease: Well, Pat Brown sought to overturn the Cahan rules from time to time.
- Rowland: Why?
- Blease: Because he essentially represented the police point of view. You'll find a muddled path that he trod on, a muddy path that he trod on, on these issues. That is, he did and he didn't, because he was pressured from the liberal side of the Democratic party and he needed to have those troops. The same kind of dynamic existed generally within the Democratic party as existed in the legislature in that there's the liberal wing and the civil liberties wing which he had to pay attention to. So, he was never as strident as it would be from somebody who doesn't have those pressures--on the Republican side, where there's really no developed civil liberties point of view; maybe from the nascent libertarians there is growing up the conservative with the civil liberties side to him. So, he had taken a variety of views on that. But he, as I recall, had sought to overturn it.
- Rowland: There's something I want to throw in here. I notice that the only appointment that Goodwin Knight made to the supreme court was Marshall McComb, who later became quite controversial. I was wondering if there was some connection there with the Cahan and Priestly decisions and the selection of McComb to the state supreme court.
- Blease: I don't know.
- Rowland: I was wondering what your relations were with Attorney General Brown and his staff.
- Blease: Well, I'm trying to recall. The attorney general has always been active at the legislative things, so that their representatives were always around and present. They were people that you got to know because they were always in the same committees, they were always dealing with the same issues, and so you always had to contend with them and get to know them. Well, as attorney general--isn't that one year prior to '57--yes, I guess it's essentially six months that really we're talking about.
- Rowland: Yes.

Blease: Because, you know, the sessions were only every other year, so it would have been six months in '57, and there'd have been the '58 election, so the next time we'd have seen him [would have been] in '59.

Rowland: What prominent groups and individuals were opposed to the Cahan and Priestly decisions? This would include special interests and legislators, I suppose, any people you opposed.

Blease: Well, the law enforcement agencies and probably the--

Rowland: And the District Attorneys Association?

Blease: The District Attorneys Association.

Rowland: Was Ed Meese there representing--

Blease: He was for a while, yes.

Rowland: And Peace Officers Association.

Blease: Yes. Well, let's see. Well, there are a number of police organizations. The District Attorneys Association. There's the Peace Officers Association. And then there's PORAC, Peace Officers Research Association, which is the bread and butter wing of the police and frequently much closer to the liberal wing of the Democratic party because they--

Rowland: What was that again? Which group was that?

Blease: PORAC, Police Officers Research--something--Association. I forget. It still is around. It's the largest peace officers organization in the state. But it lobbies for collective bargaining laws for police and more money and things like that. It occasionally gets into substantive issues, but for the most part doesn't.

Rowland: Any prominent legislators who were always trying to reverse the decisions?

Blease: Well, you mentioned a number of them. Bruce Allen.

Rowland: Bruce Allen.

Blease: Until he left [he] was on the assembly side, always very aggressive.

Rowland: I have another individual, Clayton Dills, Assemblyman Dills.

Blease: Clayton Dills was a nonentity.

Rowland: Ed Regan, Senator Regan.

Blease: Well, I suppose so.

Rowland: Now is--[laughter]

Blease: He's a colleague of mine. I think for the most part he opposed the Cahan decision and many of those decisions.

##

Blease: Bert Coffey, a strong civil libertarian and the subject of political attacks, was very close to George Miller, Jr. Entirely apart from Miller's interest in civil liberties was his friendship with Coffey and with others, his knowledge about the impact that those things [Cahan and Priestly decisions] would have on people.

You see, you have lingering here the idea that somehow there's some magic to what it is that you do, and there isn't any at all, or rather the magic of it is what it is that you can do. It really depends upon talking with people, when you're talking about internally, until the climate changes, and my view was that largely we had no big control over that or maybe no control over that at all. In any event, those things were going to happen; they were beyond my power. So, you took these things in place as the chess pieces that are already there. The configuration of the board is already there. And you work within those confines.

There are a lot of things to be done. There were always many more things to be done than there were people to do them. There were so many issues of such great import--farmworkers and prison reform and all these other things that affected so many people. You could just run from day and night, and you had to make your best shot at it.

Rowland: I did note that the senate reorganized fact-finding committees in 1959, which deleted the Burns committee as a formal fact-finding committee and made it a subcommittee of the newly created General Research Committee. Do you know why that was done?

Blease: I'm relatively certain that was Miller's doing.

Rowland: The problem with this [was that] it made the Burns committee more obscure to the public and made it more secretive in its operation.

Blease: Well, you know, one has to make your choices about what you want and all that.

There are a lot of--this debate over long-term mental commitments, that some of those people would end up in jail because they had no other place to go. They should make a choice for a

Blease: , jail term rather than no commitment to the mental commitment system. Those things happen. I think you just have to make a very quick decision on those.

Having the Burns committee fade out--I don't think I even speculated about it being worse .

Rowland: You feel it would be a reduction in power because of the change in committee status?

Blease: Look, the issue wasn't making their procedures fairer. You know, [chuckles] that's like discussing, what is the best form of execution? An abolitionist ought not to spend any time on that. That's the wrong end of it. You can't have a fair inquisition. You know, you don't provide counsel. I mean, maybe you do something, but you don't spend your time saying that we want to have counsel there when they're preparing the auto-da-fé, lighting the torches. It's just in the nature of it that it's wrong and inquisitions have to be opposed. So, if the committee faded out, fine. That was the way to do it.

The Rumford Fair Housing Bill

Rowland: Why don't we go to the next topic here, which is fair housing. I want to try to get to farmworkers before the tape ends. I've got quite a few questions on that. The most fascinating thing about the fair housing thing, as far as legislation was concerned, was moving the Rumford bill through the senate in 1963. I was wondering what role you might have played in--

Blease: Almost none, I think. Ed Regan and a few other people did that.

Rowland: Yes. I wonder what effect this fair housing victory had upon the senate old guard. There was quite a bit of news media about it.

Blease: Well, it was a defeat for Burns, and I guess he had had it blocked in the GE, Governmental Efficiency Committee. I forget which. It was Ed Regan that pried that all loose and put the votes together, I think. I rather suspect that's why he's here today. I'm not sure. I've never asked him. I don't think I will, although--see, my mind has been recently refreshed on this because I have had a discussion with him since I've been here. [chuckles] He's the one to talk to about all that, and he would tell you, if you have an interview with him, about--

Rowland: Joseph Rattigan also told us at length about that. He played a role in that too.

Blease: And Joe Rattigan, yes.

Rowland: And also Glenn Anderson.

Blease: Well, from what Regan tells me, he kept Rattigan in the dark about it as well. [laughter]

Rowland: [laughter] I wonder what effect the anti-fair housing victory at the polls in 1964 had on legislators in the '65 session.

Blease: It had a big effect on Jesse Unruh. Afterwards, he tried to get the Unruh Civil Rights bill. I'm trying to think about the timing of it, but I remember we had a major time of it defeating an Unruh bill to reduce the coverage of his own act.

Rowland: Could you describe that?

Blease: Well, what he did was to try to remove certain features of his own previous act. He appealed to the NAACP, or attempted to, by attacking the real estate interests, by putting some stuff in there that was aimed at the real estate interests and, at the same time, reducing the coverage of the act, as I recall. (It's been a long time.) I went and talked with the real estate lobbyists and they didn't like the Unruh bill either. I said, "Look, we have a joint interest here. You know what's being done to you, and I don't like these other reductions in coverage. You work your side of the street, and we'll work ours." And Unruh's bill was defeated in the senate.

Unruh saw very early that there was going to be a backlash and he tried to move with it. He knew he was going to run for governor, and he tried to tarnish his civil rights image a little bit. It's always a delicate posturing, you know, [chuckles] as to whether the voters will view you affirmatively or not negatively.

Rowland: What were the attempts of the ACLU or the Quakers to defeat Prop 14 at the polls?

Blease: Well, they did what they could, putting out information and mailings and things like that. I didn't have a lot to do with those--the organizational end of things.

Rowland: We have a note here that there was a California Committee for Fair Practices. I wonder if you had played a role in that.

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: What was that group?

Blease: Well, I was a member of it and attended a lot of meetings. That was a composite group of people from the NAACP, the Jewish community, civil liberties groups, Quakers--a coalition. That was a coalition that really developed with the fair employment practices in the '50s and went through Rumford and the civil rights acts and those kinds of things. Bill Becker was very active in those things.

Rowland: Right. What internal difficulties did the committee have when Bill Becker left, when he was appointed by Pat Brown in 1965? We have a note that there was internal bickering on that committee over his role and position.

Blease: I don't recall that. I don't know whether I was even a party to that. I have no recollection of that at all.

Rowland: I have a group of questions on the Short-Doyle Act. How did the '57 Short-Doyle Act pass the Senate Government Efficiency Committee? If you remember from the Dr. Portia Bell Hume xerox I sent you, she had talked about the big battles in the Senate Government Efficiency Committee with certain senators calling it a communist bill and various other allegations.

Blease: Right, yes. I don't have any clear recollection of all this, though.

Rowland: I have another note that Senator Desmond attacked the Short-Doyle bill in '57 on the senate floor as leading to communism. I just wonder if you might know where some of the background of --

Blease: Well, there were always these fringe arguments that communists were out to control the world, in part by controlling mental health, and that they were going to put all these right-wingers in some mental institution in Alaska, or some such bizarre plan. [laughter] That was not a significant point of view. In our democratic system, we tend to represent the broad spectrum of people, including loonies, so that they had their point of view represented. [laughter]

But the broad mental health movement--that wasn't really the doing of the Quakers so much. Now, I know the Friends Committee had spent time, you know, associated with various mental health groups and this. But I suppose it's because I wasn't really very close to that. There were other people doing those things. I was an extreme pragmatist and looking at what had to be done and at who was doing it and if it was being done. There were other things to be done that nobody was tending to.

Rowland: Maybe we can go right to the farmworkers because I have a bunch of questions on those. First off, I wondered, how was visibility of farmworkers' problems raised in California?

Blease: How were they raised?

Farmworkers and the Bracero Program

Rowland: Or how did farmworkers become an issue in California politics?

Blease: They had been an issue from The Grapes of Wrath, I think.

Rowland: They seem to have gathered more visibility in the late '50s and early '60s.

Blease: That's true, because---well, there were various organizational attempts and---

Rowland: What were those organizations?

Blease: Well, organized labor had funded some efforts to organize in the fields. Ernesto Galarza had spent, I think, a better part of two decades getting his head beat in attempting to organize farmworkers. I'd met with Ernesto and others and Dolores Huerta, who is still very active with the farmworkers. Dolores came to the legislature on many occasions and really was the heart of the lobbying on behalf of legislation for farmworkers.

Rowland: We have a note that the Community Service Organization, I think, of the Quakers was quite prominent in supporting farmworkers' legislation. I was wondering if you have any knowledge about that?

Blease: The American Friends Service Committee?

Rowland: No. The Community Service Organization, CSO, which was a Quaker group primarily down in southern California.

Blease: I don't know.

Rowland: I was wondering what the reaction of the Knight administration was to farmworker problems. Were they supportive of farmworker legislation?

Blease: I doubt it. I doubt it. That was a day and age in which, before reapportionment, the senate represented essentially rural, agricultural districts. It was politically impossible to get any legislation through, even with people who were more liberal minded on those issues.

Rowland: Yes. Out of the governor's office came the Advisory Committee on Child and Youth. I wonder if you knew exactly what that advisory committee did and what it was--?

Blease: Well, I don't recall specifically. There were a lot of different ways of dramatizing the plight of farmworkers, and one of the ways was through children--educational problems, language problems, other kinds of handicaps. There are different ways of seeing a common plight of a people whose sustenance, or lack of it, came from farm work. The free school lunches and a lot of issues like that had farmworkers involved with them, at least farmworker children. This is one aspect of those concerns.

Rowland: I have a note here that there was a California Committee for Agricultural Labor formed. Does that ring a bell? I wondered if you had played any role in the forming of that committee or could tell us what the objectives of that committee were.

Blease: I don't really recall.

Rowland: I'm trying to follow this chronologically here, and I notice that Senator Hugo Fisher in '59 sponsored a bill to establish an Agricultural Labor Relations Commission. I was wondering what your role might have been in that legislation and why Hugo Fisher sponsored the bill.

Blease: Well, I'm sorry my mind is so dim on these things, twenty years later. Now I recall. Part of the issue, part of the movement there, was to get the U.S. Industrial Relations Commission, which had authority to establish minimum wage rates for women and children in agriculture, to do that and to galvanize them because that would then set wage trends for males as well; it would thereby influence. I'm sure we had something to do with Hugo's legislation, but, well--just a variety of ways of trying to deal with it [chuckles], and I have only the vaguest of heads with respect to all those things.

Rowland: I had some questions on the health bill, but I just wonder if that brings any memories back, the farmworkers health bill of 1961. I have a question here: How was the language of it drafted?

Blease: Well, by 1961, I was really out of that for the most part.

Rowland: When did you make the move to the--was that '60 or '61?

Blease: In January of '60, I went to the ACLU. And Joe Gutterman and Bob McClain really for the Friends took over much more--did the farm-worker thing. I don't recall that I spent very much time on any of that, except to look at the civil liberties aspect, the importance of trespass bills and those kinds of things on farmworker organizing, looking at legislation that could be used criminally to deal with people in labor organizations; that kind of thing, I would look at. But all the things involving benefits for farmworkers, new labor laws--all those things were largely out of my bailiwick. There were other people who worked on them.

And even during the '50s, the late '50s, Dolores Huerta was on the scene and she was there to do that. She was intimately familiar with it. And other than attending interim committee hearings on a lot of those issues, Dolores really did the heart of the lobbying on that.

Rowland: There is a Kaufman Report of 1959 put out by a group under Glenn Kaufman, who was an aide to the attorney general, investigating the bracero program abuses at a recruiting center in Mexico. We had a note that the Kaufman report was not released to the public by the legislature, and I was wondering what information you might have had on that or the influence of Pat Brown on the Kaufman Report.

Blease: I don't have any recollection.

Rowland: I was wondering what your relations were with Neil Haggerty over the efforts to defeat Public Law 78.

Blease: I had no relations with him at all.

Rowland: [chuckles] Going back to your--

Blease: Right. The man sitting with his back to us.

Rowland: I was wondering, how close was Haggerty with Governor Knight?

Blease: Close, as I understand it. Very close.

Rowland: Haggerty was also close with Luther Lincoln. Was that--?

Blease: Yes. I'd believe all that, sure. Haggerty had done very well by labor during those Republican years.

Rowland: I'm wondering how sincere Haggerty's attempts were to unionize farm-workers.

Blease: Well, I'd heard all kinds of-- The farmworkers were always the first ones to be cut out of unemployment benefits bills and all those things. So, it had to be low on labor's priority. Labor always had a central--unions central to its concern, and that's the skilled trades. They've always been big within the state labor federation, and they got first call on all those things. If you're in there bartering for--the heart of the labor lobbying was always for the unemployment, disability, all those big bucks issues. That's what they're about. And I think they were secondarily or tertiarily or way down the line--we've got to do something about farmworkers. That's my recollection of it, and I think you could document that. Difficult--and they played it close to the vest. But they made token efforts to put some money in it, and nationally, of course, the AFL-CIO has funded farm organizations. They've put quite a bit of money in, as well as automobile workers.

Rowland: I have a note here that the Farm Placement Service was the group in charge of setting wages for braceros in California. I was wondering if you could shed some light on how they--

Blease: Federal, a federal agency.

Rowland: This was the state Department of Employment, Farm Placement Service, and I was wondering if you at all could shed some light on what their criteria were for setting wages for braceros.

Blease: My recollection, and it's just the dimmest of recollections, is that they were set by the farmers.

Rowland: The growers, you mean?

Blease: Sure. The bracero program was a device to have a captive labor pool for the work on the farms. It's the best of all worlds.

Rowland: Why was the bracero program ended or terminated?

Blease: There was pressure on the congress to end it.

Rowland: Where did that pressure come from?

Blease: I guess labor all over the country put pressure on the congress.

Rowland: Was there an anti-California, anti-western movement in congress?

Blease: No, but I'm sure it didn't hurt to have it regionally isolated. Of course, you're going to pick up a lot of votes there by people who have no direct concerns about it, who are not going to be defeated by votes on those issues. That great northeastern tier of more liberal votes--you don't have many farmworkers up there.

Rowland: Right.

Blease: It's always strange to find the workers that are imported from here or there to do little jobs, you know, picking apples in Maine or whatever. But that was a massive, major, national battle.

Rowland: Were you active in the movement to persuade congressmen?

Blease: No, no. There was a national lobbying organization in the congress. The ACLU had one, the Friends, and there were other organizations. They had always been somewhat better organized at least on the national level. There were more groups located in Washington that were interested in these issues.

Rowland: The big question I'm still wondering is, why did Pat Brown seek to extend the bracero program, Public Law 78?

Blease: Seek to extend it?

Rowland: Yes. He attempted to seek a compromise between the growers and the unions and supporters of farmworkers.

Blease: Well, it's a complicated state. You get a lot of Democratic areas which are really farm areas, up and down the Valley. Pat Brown was supported by the Valley, carried the Valley, until he lost to Reagan. Jerry Brown makes overtures to the agricultural communities as well. All governors do. It's a force in California. Agriculture is a major industry. So, any person who is governor of the state is going to look at the more complex side of those issues.

Rowland: One other question. In talking about his compromise to extend the bracero program (I believe it was for one more year), he talked about developing a master plan for migrant workers. Does that ring a bell, or did you have any activity in that?

Blease: No, no.

Rowland: Do you recall it at all and why--if it ever passed as legislation?

Blease: No. You'll also discover that I have tunnel vision. [chuckles]

Rowland: [laughter] I sent you this list of "Who's Who in Agribusiness." This was from Ramparts magazine. I wondered if you might be able to shed some light on some of these gentlemen and if you had any knowledge of their roles in seeking to continue the bracero program.

Blease: No, I don't. I recognize many of the names. [looking down list of names] Of course, you know who Norton Simon, Edward Carter, and the Di Giorgios are. Those are all large--well, no, Simon is--. Edward Carter--was he not a Brown appointee on the University of California?

Rowland: Yes, right. He was one of the regents.

Blease: Banking and agricultural interests and wine. Karl Wente. Is that-- he's the vice president of the Bank of America. Maybe it's not the Wente family--

Rowland: With the wine.

Blease: Yes.

Rowland: Is it spelled the same way? [spells out name] W-e-n-t-e?

Blease: It looks like it. Yes, it does look like it.

Lionel Steinberg is a sort of a liberal Democratic farmer. He was very big in the Pat Brown days.

[completes reading of list] That list looked to me very truncated. I'm sure there are just dozens of others.

Rowland: Yes, right. I was wondering if the unemployment rate of 6% in 1963 affected a push to end the bracero program in '64. There might have been a connection there. I was wondering if that might--

Blease: Possible. The bracero program was always a highly controlled program, you know.

Rowland: Highly--?

Blease: Highly controlled.

Rowland: By whom?

Blease: By the farmers. They'd have these large organizational structures to bring the workers in, and then they would bring in forty thousand, fifty thousand, per season.

Rowland: How would that work into the state bureaucracy?

Blease: I don't know how it did.

Rowland: For instance, what agencies would they be influencing?

Blease: I don't know, except that there were--I should recall from all those interim committee hearings. But they were able to move tens of thousands of workers across the border to specific fields, and they housed them, and they worked during the growing season, and then they were gone. It's a little hard for me to visualize how

Blease: unemployment generally had to do with it, unless the claim was being made that people were moving from areas of some unemployment into agriculture. I have a little difficulty believing that was a major reason.

Rowland: One of the last questions here deals with the Quakers' newsletter about the 1965 session, in which it described it as a very chaotic session in that there were so many bills being passed, or attempted to be passed, and there were midnight sessions, and party loyalties broke down into personal bickering. I was wondering, what was the background to all the chaos of the '65 [session]?

Blease: I don't know. I didn't write any of those newsletters from '60 on.

Rowland: Do you recall particularly the '65 session? It seems like maybe reapportionment played a role in that.

Blease: Yes, I'm sure it did. One never seemed more chaotic to me than the other, to tell you the truth. They were always, always exhausted at the end of those things. There were always midnight sessions.

##

Blease: The end game [last days of the legislature] is the big game.

Rowland: Why is that?

Blease: Because so many things are happening so quickly that nobody can keep track of it. It's much easier to run things through when things are confused than it is when you have--

Rowland: When you say "run things through," what do you mean? Could you give me an example of--?

Blease: You get five hundred bills on the calendar or a thousand bills. Those last days, they're keeping track of the bills on a chalkboard. You don't know where the damn things are. People who are skillful in that system can run a locomotive through the place and you'd never know it. It's not possible to keep up with that. It's only the people who know exactly what they're doing in the middle of it who have the influence. The normal committee system breaks down. The normal system of review by the legislature completely breaks down in the last days of the session. Skilled lobbyists can do very well under those circumstances because there's maximum confusion and minimum of review and a great premium on those who know exactly what they're doing for those bills. I did it a lot myself. Who knows what's in those bills?

Rowland: You said in our last interview that you frequently didn't know who exactly was carrying your legislation, piggybacked on a--

Blease: Oh, no. I knew who was carrying it. They didn't.

Rowland: They didn't know. Right.

Blease: They didn't know what was in their legislation.

Rowland: How would you actually do that?

Blease: Oh, you have an amendment made in committee, or somebody go to them and say, "I'll support your bill if you'll do this, that, or the other thing." I wrote a lot of things at the back of the committee room, standing in the hall, and I was probably productive of a lot of bad legislation. But, you know, you write a bill in three minutes--you write something, and it goes in there.

Rowland: And you would have it submitted as an amendment to a particularly important bill that would pass?

Blease: Yes. Sure.

Rowland: How is a rider actually used, as opposed to an amendment?

Blease: A rider? Oh, they're always amendments.

Rowland: They're amendments?

Blease: Yes. There are no riders. It's always an amendment that has to be germane to the legislation in some sense. But if it comes through, it affects this; it affects that. And graft something in that area and, bang, it's gone.

Rowland: Now, you recall the battle over reapportionment. I remember you briefly mentioned that you had talked with Speaker Unruh about that in detail. I was wondering if you might be able to give some background on the battles between the two houses in that '65 session, between the senate and assembly, over reapportionment.

Blease: Well, it was a knock-down drag-out battle. The senate's life was at stake. Over half of those senators were going to be gone after reapportionment, probably over half; I forget what the numbers were. They, in connection with major lobbying organizations, had launched a major effort around the country to support the Dirksen amendment.

Rowland: That's the federal constitutional amendment.

Blease: Right. And it was really the ratification of the Dirksen amendment that was really critical, and killing the Dirksen was the critical task.

Rowland: Why did the assembly stall on passing the senate bill of reapportionment? That was Teale's bill--I think it was SB 6--in '65.

Blease: [pauses to think] Well, they couldn't reach agreement, could they, on a--I'm trying to remember.

Rowland: There were news accounts that Speaker Unruh didn't agree with the apportionment of Los Angeles County, redistricting of Los Angeles County.

Blease: I suspect that's the case. I'd be willing to bet that's the case. The person who could give you an exact detailed account of all this is Philip Burton. He will have been--well, he was gone by then, was he not? He was gone. When did he leave?

Rowland: '65.

Blease: '64? When did he get elected to Congress? '64?

Rowland: Well, we had John Burton in there in '65, but his brother is gone. [pointing to roster] This is the '65 roster.

Blease: So, Phil must have left the year before. Well, nonetheless, Phil has been involved with every reapportionment of California, to my knowledge, and he's been the broker on all the congressional districts. But a lot of people have to like Phil, or else they might not be back. But I'm sure he has those details in his head, if you ever talk to him, if you ever get time to talk to him.

Rowland: Yes, that's true. If we ever get to Washington, or even catch him here, it's possible. Okay. I guess that's about it. It's getting close to four o'clock. I guess we'll close up shop. Thanks for a most enlightening interview on your career.

Transcriber: Marilyn White
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Samuel Yorty

SAMUEL YORTY: A CHALLENGE TO THE DEMOCRATS

An Interview Conducted by
Julie Shearer
in 1979



SAMUEL YORTY

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

Retirement does not sit easily upon the shoulders of Samuel William Yorty. In the nearly fifty years since he first entered California politics, making speeches for Frank Shaw's successful mayoralty campaign in 1933 in Los Angeles, he has never been far from the political arena. He served three terms in the state assembly, two terms as congressman, three terms as mayor of Los Angeles, and has been a frequent political candidate (for the U.S. Senate in 1940, 1954, and 1956; for governor in 1966; for president in 1968; and again for mayor in 1981, challenging Mayor Tom Bradley in his bid for a third term).

In political office or outside it, Yorty has never been far from controversy. As assemblyman in the thirties, he established a reputation as a crusading liberal, sponsoring pro-union labor-relations bills, an old-age pension act, chattel mortgage reform; and introducing legislation to create state-owned public utilities, mortgage moratorium for small homeowners, curb strike-breaking, limit court injunctions in labor disputes; and to pardon Tom Mooney, a radical labor leader accused of involvement in terrorist bombing. During his 1938 term, he alienated his liberal supporters by sponsoring legislation to create the California Assembly Un-American Activities Committee, the first such committee in the United States. Under Yorty's chairmanship, the committee investigated the alleged presence of communists in the Los Angeles office of the State Relief Administration.

In 1940 he ran for U.S. Senate on a platform calling for intervention in Europe against Hitler. As congressman in 1952 and 1953, Yorty, among other actions, launched an attack against Defense Secretary Charles Wilson when the latter proposed economies of \$5 million in the military budget. Yorty also urged greater military efforts, including the unleashing of Chiang Kai-shek in the Korean war.

During the period of gubernatorial administrations of Goodwin Knight and Edmund G. Brown, Sr., Yorty emerged as a controversial force to be reckoned with in the Democratic party. In 1954 he abandoned his congressional seat to run for U.S. Senate against popular Republican Thomas Kuchel. He won his party's nomination with the help of the liberal California Democratic Council (CDC) endorsement, backed by the CDC's labor membership. He was defeated by Kuchel (and, Yorty feels, by unacknowledged anti-Yorty sentiment in the CDC). However, Yorty again attended the CDC endorsing convention of 1956. When it became clear that support was lacking for his Senate candidacy, Yorty withdrew his name and walked out of the convention, charging the proceedings were "wired, stacked, rigged, and packed...by left-wingers." He stayed on in the race, denouncing the CDC and their nominee Richard Richards, and ran on an anti-communism and Red China campaign.

In 1960, Yorty supported Richard Nixon against John F. Kennedy for president. In 1964, he served as the southern California leader in Lyndon Johnson's presidential campaign. In 1966, he opposed Governor Brown in the primary and withheld support for his candidacy in the general election, in which Brown lost decisively to Ronald Reagan. Meanwhile, Yorty racked up substantial victories in nonpartisan elections for mayor against Republican Norris Poulson in 1961, James Roosevelt in 1965, and Thomas Bradley in 1969. In 1968, Yorty took time out to seek nomination for president, urging that Americans fight to win in Vietnam. Between forays into the political arena (the latest to challenge Mayor Tom Bradley in 1981, when Yorty was 72 years old), Yorty has maintained a law practice in Los Angeles and hosted a weekly television show.

One interview was conducted with Samuel Yorty on May 16, 1979. The tape-recorded conversation was sandwiched in among appointments with clients and a conference with his colleagues and through a brown-bag lunch at his law office in Los Angeles. Displayed are an impressive number of medals and a view of the LA city skyline. Questions were directed to the former mayor's philosophy, the attraction of political life, and the beliefs and practices he developed during his long span of political involvement, with particular reference to the gubernatorial administrations of Goodwin Knight and Edmund G. Brown, Senior.

The tapes were transcribed, edited lightly by the interviewer, and reviewed by Mr. Yorty, who filled in some dates and names, and verified spellings of some proper names.

The agreement to deposit the published transcript of the interview at first specified that publication be delayed until May 1984. After Mr. Yorty's review of the transcript, the passage of two years' time, and the death of one of the subjects of discussion, Mr. Yorty amended the agreement to allow immediate publication. The transcription then was typed in final form and readied for printing.

Further interviews with Mr. Yorty are planned by the oral history office at the University of California, Los Angeles, to amplify his role in the life of that city.

Julie Gordon Shearer
Interviewer-Editor

1 June 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

[Date of Interview: 16 May 1979]##

Yorty: Tenney saw a few Jews in the Communist movement and concluded they were all Communists, and he kind of went off his rocker.

Shearer: This was Jack Tenney?

Yorty: Tenney, yes.

Shearer: At what point did this begin to happen?

Yorty: Well, I think around 1945 or so. I was probably in the Army, but when I came back I went in the legislature in '49. I had to kind of put him down. I hated to do it, because I'd known him so well. He was a good guy at one time. But he really lost his mind.

Family Background

Shearer: [tape turned off and restarted] I'm in the law office of Samuel Yorty, who has consented to be interviewed on his political activities during the years 1954 to 1966. Although we have to acknowledge that his political career started and flourished much earlier and has continued beyond that period, we're going to focus on the period of time during which Goodwin Knight and Pat Brown were governors, which is 1954 to 1966. We have a format which I'd like to make a little bow to, to try and get a little bit of your background -- your childhood and your parents.

Yorty: Okay. My mother [Johanna Egan Yorty] was born in Ireland in a little place in Tipperary County called Clonmel. It was the

##This symbol indicates that tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended,

Yorty: biggest inland city in Ireland, but that's not very big, because most of the cities are on the coast. I think that the population was about ten thousand. She used to go to a well there called St. Patrick's Well, and I went to see it when she was alive, and it was mess; they had trees in it and everything-- she didn't like my report of this well. [laughs] But after she died, I raised the money and restored the well. It's very pretty now, and I did that in her honor.

Shearer: And your father was Frank Patrick Yorty.

Yorty: He comes from an old Pennsylvania family. The first deed we have that appends to a Yorty is about 1740. There's a house there now--I've forgotten the name of it, I just saw a report on it the other day, that it's being considered one of the most beautiful farms in the United States, and it's still in the Yorty family. Although the present owner married a Yorty girl, it was always called the Yorty farm. The old house there was completed in 1792. It's about a twenty-room house with two-foot-thick walls of brick. I guess it's quite a place. I've seen the house myself, back there in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. That's where it is. They're a very old family.

Shearer: And then they moved to--?

Yorty: Well, they went different places. My father went to Milwaukee and then to Lincoln, Nebraska.

Shearer: What his business? Was he a rancher?

Yorty: No, he was builder. I remember a building he was building in Lincoln, Nebraska, because he told me he always hired union bricklayers, because they had standards. And I never forgot that. But he was badly hurt in a couple of accidents, and pretty broke. It broke up our family. They were terrible accidents. He had a contract to paint a big hotel in Lincoln. He went up a scaffold to check the operation and the scaffold broke, and he fell on his back on a paint can. He was in bed for a year.

Shearer: How terrible!

Yorty: Of course, there was no medical insurance in those days, and we had to move from our nice house to a house we didn't like in Lincoln.

Shearer: He was the contractor?

Yorty: Yes. He was in various trades, but the best thing he did was this contracting and building, and he was very good at it.

Shearer: Did that end his career?

Yorty: Well, he was painting, I think, under contract to Beatrice Creamery in Lincoln, inside, and fell again and smashed his leg, and he had to wear a brace until he died. So he had very bad luck. My mother left him. He was quite a bit older than she was. I was only about seven or eight when she left him. We stayed in Lincoln, where my mother went into the rooming house business and made quite a success of it.

Shearer: Was it just a coincidence that your parents separated at the time, or do you think the tragedy--?

Yorty: Well, the tragedy and a lot of other things. It was just unfortunate, that's all.

Shearer: Was it very hard on you?

Yorty: Not so very. My mother took good care of us, the two girls and myself. Of course, I could always see my father. I'd go down to the place where he liked to play dominoes--he was a great domino shark--and see him, and try to get a weekly allowance, which I didn't always get.

Shearer: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Yorty: Two sisters, both older. One [Kathleen] is still in Lincoln, Nebraska. She married a fellow named Leslie Seacrest. That's a well-known family there. His uncle owned both newspapers. My younger sister [Enid] died last year. She was about seventy-two, I guess. She died of emphysema.

Shearer: That's a sad thing.

Yorty: I must say, if it wasn't for my sister Enid out here, I probably never would have been elected in the first instance.

Shearer: Really? How is that?

Yorty: Well, she and a girl named Joy worked precincts in the old sixty-fourth Assembly District. Of course I was unknown, but they worked the precincts and they had people sign cards [saying] that they were going to vote for me. All the precincts they worked, I carried. That was enough for the nomination.

Shearer: That's amazing.

Yorty: And after that, I was a Democrat on the ticket with Franklin Roosevelt in 1936. I couldn't lose.

Shearer: You chose just the right time. Had you had political ambitions earlier?

Yorty: I had political ambitions much earlier, and some practical experience. I worked on the Central Valley campaign about 1933--I've forgotten when that took place. I worked with Ray Davidson, who was the best public relations man in southern California in those days, and Whitaker and Baxter handled it up north, and Ray handled the south.

Shearer: This is the Central Valley Project?

Yorty: Yes. It was to vote \$170 million in state bonds to finance the project. We saved enough votes in the south to carry it. But the bonds were never used because the federal government took over the project and financed it.

Shearer: I see. Were you disappointed that that occurred?

Yorty: No, I was for it.

Shearer: I mean, about the feds taking over the--

Yorty: Oh, no. We just wanted the project built, and they built it.

Shearer: You were how old then? You were just out of school?

Yorty: Well, let's see. I was seventeen when I came to California. That was in 1927. I'd be about twenty-three, twenty-four, I guess.

Shearer: And that was when you entered law school, Southwestern University?

Yorty: Yes, about that time. I worked in a clothing store until school started.

Shearer: And you moved with your mother and two sisters?

Yorty: No, I came here by myself. They came here later. I got here with eighty dollars in my pocket.

The Attraction of Politics

Shearer: Heavens!

I'm going to ask some general questions which I don't want to lose track of, just because our time is short. Then I'd like to come

Shearer: back and try to fill in some of the details. Can you remember what it was that pulled you into politics? What influence?

Yorty: Well, it was the influence of my family, I think. My father was a great friend of William Jennings Bryan, and a great admirer of George W. Norris in Nebraska. My mother was always very interested, as many Irish are, in politics. I remember when President Wilson was re-elected in 1916, she took me down in the rain to stand outside the Lincoln Star to see the returns coming in. They flashed them on a screen then.

When I was in ninth grade, they had an experimental junior high, just one year, the first junior high in Nebraska, though. I was president of the class that time. It was my first election. I beat a girl by one vote. My teacher, Mrs. [Amy Shively] Grubb, who I admired very much, and I think is the greatest teacher I ever had, had us write a little piece--I don't know what you'd call it--about what we wanted to do, and I wrote down that I wanted to be a politician. She said that was fine, except that she preferred statesman. [laughter]

Shearer: What did the word "politician" actually mean to you?

Yorty: It just meant being in politics.

Shearer: I see. Being up there on the platform, giving speeches, getting the handclaps--?

Yorty: Yes. I remember my father took me down to hear [Joseph] Howell, who was running in Nebraska. I've forgotten when that was. He was beaten, I think, by [Gilbert Monell] Hitchcock. I remember going down to hear him speak.

Shearer: Did politicians that you had heard inspire you?

Yorty: No.

Shearer: Or was it the whole event?

Yorty: It was the whole thing, yes. I don't remember what they said.

Shearer: How would you feel about Mrs. Grubb's euphemism about politicians? Do you feel that's something that you would aspire to?

Yorty: No, she had nothing to do with that. But she felt that we hadn't been properly taught in grammar and in spelling and so forth, and she really pulled us up to par. She was really a great person.

Shearer: What about after your many years of experience in politics in some of the very heated controversies in which you were involved? Do you think that Mrs. Grubb's description was accurate, even desirable?

Yorty: Oh, yes, sure. I think you should try to be a statesman, not a politician. For instance, in 1940, when I campaigned for United States Senate on the basis of "Isolationism has failed; stop Hitler now," I knew that I wasn't going to be elected. People didn't want to face the facts that we were going to be in a war. But I ended my political career temporarily to make that campaign.

Legislature, Law School, and Marriage

Shearer: You were in the assembly from 1936 to 1940, and then you went into the Air Force in 1942.

Yorty: I went into the Air Force in 1942, but I ran for Senate in 1940 on the slogan "Isolationism has failed; stop Hitler now."

Shearer: Who was your opponent then?

Yorty: Hiram Johnson.

Shearer: [laughs] You certainly picked someone!

Yorty: Well, Roosevelt pulled the rug out from under our feet. He was running, and he said, "Our boys will never again fight on foreign soil," and that pulled the rug out from under me. I remember William Gibbs McAdoo was head of the National President Lines, and he was a former secretary of the treasury under Woodrow Wilson, and the former Senator from California. I went to see him, and I'll never forget, he told me, "You're the only one telling the truth."

Shearer: McAdoo said that?

Yorty: Yes, William McAdoo.

Shearer: Your father and your mother were both apparently quite interested in politics.

Yorty: Very much so.

Shearer: Did they actually become involved?

- Yorty: No, except that I remember that Charlie Bryan when he ran for the governor of Nebraska, to which he was elected--I remember he called my mother on the phone, and wanted her to help him, which she did. He was William Jennings Bryan's brother. Of course, my sister Kitty liked it, and was always taking part in politics, not as a politician, but as a worker, you know.
- Shearer: Can I jump back again to about 1927? You graduated then from Southwestern University?
- Yorty: No, I entered Southwestern.
- Shearer: Oh, you entered in 1927.
- Yorty: I didn't get to California until 1927.
- Shearer: Then you went through the law school in about, what--?
- Yorty: Well, I don't know. I was in and out, because this was during the Depression. I had to quit and work full-time and then I'd go back again. I became a motion picture projectionist at that time. I thought I could work as a projectionist and go to school, but the hours were such that I couldn't. So I had to give that up.
- Shearer: You must have gotten to see many, many movies.
- Yorty: Oh, I'll say! [laughs] Yes, I remember some of them. All Quiet on the Western Front I projected. I did that in a little theater out in Whittier. The most famous picture, as far as I'm concerned, and I can't think of the name of it right now, Oklahoma in the land rush, with William Dix as the star. [Cimarron] It was based on the land rush. It was a wonderful picture.
- Shearer: It would be fun to research that.
- Yorty: And I remember Arsen-Lupan with the two Barrymore brothers, Lionel as the detective and John was the clever thief. That was very well done. I also remember the famous Swedish actress, who was she?
- Shearer: Greta Garbo?
- Yorty: I remember watching her. I'd see the pictures twenty times. And I came to the conclusion that she was a very great actress.
- Shearer: A wonderful profile, too.
- Yorty: I don't remember that too much. I remember her acting was marvelous. Those are the main pictures I remember that I projected.

Shearer: So at the time that you married in 1938, by that time you were out of school, though?

Yorty: No, that was in between. I'd been re-elected to the legislature, and I was down in Palm Springs for a vacation when I met my wife down there. After that, we looked up the law and my time in the legislature was counted as being in law study. And then I took the LaSalle [correspondance] course and completed that. And then I took a bar review course based on the Witkin Review. And then I made a three-month study of the law. I started about seven in the morning, and I studied until noon. Then Bets and I--we were married then--would go down to the bowling alley and eat a sandwich and do some bowling and I'd go back and study until midnight. And I passed the bar exam. [woman comes in and interrupts] [tape turned off and restarted]

We might as well eat while we talk. Or try to.

Shearer: I'm very grateful for you setting aside so much time in your busy day. We were talking about your law studies. Because of the shortness of time, I'd like to move on to your early career in the assembly. You had term in 1936, in 1938, and then a third term?

Yorty: My third term was in 1949, after I came back from the war.

Shearer: Did you run for a third term in 1940, or had you decided to go into--?

Yorty: No, I didn't. I ran for the Senate.

Shearer: That was when you voiced your concern over isolationism.

Investigating the State Relief Administration, 1939

Shearer: Could you characterize the major concerns and issues that engaged you in those early assembly terms? I know you were on the committee to investigate state relief organizations.

Yorty: Yes. Say, do you have the paper I have here that somebody wrote up what I did in the assembly? Somebody I had here for a long time. I'll show it to you. [goes through papers] Here it is. I'll give you a copy of that. Somebody sent that to me. It tells what I did from '36 to '40, and that will save you time.

Shearer: Wonderful.

Yorty: The state committee to investigate the State Relief Administration* I formed in 1939, because we had a question of whether the state could go on administering relief--it was under the state then--and the Communists were taking over.

Shearer: This was relief to--?

Yorty: General relief in the state. They were discriminating against non-Communists and trying to recruit Communists by giving them more relief. There was a guy named Bill [William] Plunkert, who was a Communist, and he wanted to be director of relief, but he was ruled out. Another fellow was made director of relief. But this Bill Plunkert then became personnel director, and he was hiring Communists all over the state--people he thought were Communists, Communist sympathizers--and set up little cells, having discussion cells throughout California, and he hired Rose Segure, a known Communist, as his aide and she was traveling around.

So the whole thing was infiltrated by Communists. I proved this with my state committee, and we abolished the State Relief Administration, and turned relief back to the county.

Shearer: What led you to, at that point, be so uneasy about Communists in these organizations? How did you see that as a threat?

Yorty: Well, the Communists and the Nazis were working together. They made the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939. The Communists were, of course, then advocating that "the Yanks are not coming," and all that, because Russia was not in the war then. They were trying to take over--they did, really, practically take over the Young Democrats, and they were infiltrating the labor unions, and setting up their factions, what they called their factional labor unions. The Communist factions would meet before the whole union met, and then they would be all prepared to make a motion, and they'd all jump up one at a time, and the other people didn't know what was going on. They were influencing the labor movement. I called in a guy who was the head of the Communist movement in California and accused him of these things. He promised me that he wouldn't do it any more. But he did.

Shearer: Who was this?

Yorty: A guy named Paul Klein.

Shearer: K-1--?

*Assembly Relief Investigating Committee on Subversive Activities, Samuel William Yorty, Chairman.

Yorty: No, I think it was Cline, I think so. But I found out from another friend of mine about who he was, and he was the head of the Communist Party. I called him in and accused him doing these things, and he admitted it and said he wouldn't do it any more. But from then on, they started trying to blacken my name, and kept on doing it.

Shearer: This was about what time?

Yorty: By 1939. So then, I saw them taking over the State Relief Administration, and I formed the committee.

Running as a Democratic Party Candidate

Shearer: When you were elected in 1936, you ran as a Democrat.

Yorty: Yes.

Shearer: And you had the backing of the local Democratic central committee?

Yorty: No, I didn't have the backing of anybody until I got the nomination. [laughs] I was an unknown. My sister and this girl worked the precincts.

Shearer: And you were nominated then at the statewide convention.

Yorty: That was 1954.

Shearer: Right. In 1936, though--

Yorty: --I didn't know anybody.

Shearer: You didn't know anybody; you just went right out to the--

Yorty: I'd only been in California nine years.

Shearer: I see. And your second term--did you repeat your formula, that is, of going door to door?

Yorty: No, I didn't. We had a bigger campaign with the organization in back of us then.

Shearer: Who were your campaign workers?

Yorty: Well, just my family in the first campaign, and in the second one, I had quite a few Democrats in the district for me.

Shearer: But you were not, even then, the official Democratic candidate? I mean, you didn't have the backing of the official Democratic--?

Yorty: Sure I did.

Shearer: You did, in the second term. Okay.

Yorty: But when I went back to the legislature, back in '49, I didn't because it was a special election and it was non-partisan.

Shearer: Whose seat was open then?

Yorty: John Lyons, who took my place when I left for the Army.

Shearer: Was he someone that you were sort of glad to see take over the seat, or somebody you were opposed to?

Yorty: Oh, not particularly, because he was a labor leader. I wasn't against labor, but I didn't particularly appreciate John Lyons. He was not a bad guy, but he died, and that's how I happened to win the special election.

Shearer: Would it be fair to characterize one of your chief concerns in these early years as being the Communist infiltration of the local Democratic party?

Yorty: Well, that became my concern about 1939, as you'll see when you read this report I just gave you, that I was interested in a lot of different things.

Shearer: You succeeded in getting the State Relief Program stopped.

Yorty: Abolished, yes. We turned it over to the counties.

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The 1954 and 1956 Senate Campaigns

Shearer: One thing I wanted to ask you about concerns the 1954 Senate campaign. I noticed that you were endorsed by the CDC, and nominated, I believe, by Richard Richards.

Yorty: Oh, I don't remember him doing that. There was a first CDC statewide convention, I think. The Independent Progressive party hadn't gotten enough votes to become a legal party. The IPP, of course, was Communist-infiltrated. So they all decided to move in the Democratic party through the CDC. There was a very big left-wing element, pro-Communist element in the California Democratic Council. Alan Cranston was the first president of it.

Shearer: Right, president of the CDC.

Yorty: Now, they nominated a guy named Richard Graves for governor, who had just been a Republican and was an unknown, and had no chance of being elected against Goodwin Knight. The left-wingers didn't want to nominate me, but Thelma Thomas of the AF of L told them that if they didn't nominate me for Senator, that the whole AF of L was going to walk out of the convention.

Shearer: How were you able to count on such firm support from labor?

Yorty: Because I was a good labor supporter.

Shearer: All the way through, through the assembly and so forth?

Yorty: Yes. You see, labor was different in those days. Labor was sort of weak then. They had a hard time just getting unions recognized. There were no old-age pensions or anything, you know. That's why I was for those things. But the AF of L was a moderately conservative union in those days.

Shearer: Did you feel that it embodied the kind of ethic that your father believed in, that you quoted me?

Yorty: Yes, that's what started it.

Shearer: And at that point you still felt very sympathetic towards the AF of L-CIO?

Yorty: The AF of L. I still feel sympathetic to unions, when they're properly run and don't become too powerful, and don't try to force people into unions who don't want to be in them, or collect dues from them and spend on politics when they don't want to do it. I still think that union labor is a good thing.

Shearer: Has union labor been a significant quarter of support in your campaigns over the years; in '54 it was I guess--?

Yorty: In '54, that was the last time.

Shearer: What about in '56? I understand that John Despol was very firmly a supporter of yours.

Yorty: Yes, his wife had been my secretary in the legislature. Her name was Jerri Steef before she was married. I don't remember what part he played in '56, but Johnny Despol was very anti-Communist. Of course, a candidate didn't have to be a Communist to get the support against me; they were just so against me that they'd support anybody who was rather left-wing, as Richard Richards was. I was the leading candidate in 1954, although I got beat. I got a lot more votes than the guy running for governor, Richard Graves, and I thought I was entitled to run again. So we got to the [1956] CDC convention. I could see it was controlled, because before, in 1954, when the AF of L threatened to leave the convention if I wasn't nominated--they changed it. They called role right away, and I could see it was all controlled then, and I got the nomination. So I could see the things working against me in 1956, and I was so disgusted that I got up and withdrew my name and said, "You're wired, stacked, rigged, and packed," and walked out.

They insisted on putting my name up anyway. Of course, I didn't get too many votes then, because a lot of people were mad at me for saying that, who were for me. But the ones who were running the convention liked it.

In 1954 there was professor--I think I saw his name somewhere-- [Peter] Odegard?

Shearer: Odegard, yes.

Yorty: The Communists were getting around him, and wanted to nominate him. He told me that, "When I saw all those Communists, I wouldn't have any part of that." But he later denied it. I was right there, and saw them all around him and everything, trying to get him to run. He was not a Communist, of course, and he didn't want any part of them. But he later denied it, because he was a coward. That's what he told me.

Shearer: One thing that I've read about the convention and the struggle to endorse a candidate who could be elected, was that money was in very, very short supply, and I believe it was Odegard--someone said he was quoted as saying that he would run if he would be guaranteed a certain amount of money [for the campaign]. I gather that no guarantees were forthcoming.

Yorty: Well, I don't know what his situation was with that, but I do know that he told me that when he saw all those Communists surrounding him, he decided to get out; he didn't want any part of it. And I was very disappointed when he later denied it,

Raising Campaign Funds

Shearer: What about the money situation? Whom could you count on, generally, for financial support? For example, in '54 I gather that you ran pretty much your own campaign; you didn't get much help from the CDC, even though they endorsed you.

Yorty: Well, not the CDC. I think the CDC actually opposed me, but covertly, and caused me to lose the campaign. But the Democratic party and the regular Democrats supported me and put up the money.

Shearer: I see. And that would be who, basically?

Yorty: Oh, I don't know. I've forgotten now. But all the regular Democrats, labor and others.

Shearer: Yes. At one point, it is mentioned--George Luckey?

Yorty: George Luckey, yes.

Shearer: --and Ed Pauley?

Yorty: Yes, they were both friends of mine, still are, though George is dead now.

Shearer: And they were active and helpful in the '54 campaign as well? Do you recall?

Yorty: Well, I think George Luckey was. Ed, I suppose, put up a contribution, although I don't remember. I think he did. He was a good Democrat.

Shearer: Do you remember how much you had to spend, roughly, in your race?

Yorty: No, I never took part in that part of it. I always let somebody run the finances. So I don't have any idea. But I was winning, according to the polls, until the last ten days, when the Los Angeles Times put out a big smear on me. I had used my franking privilege as a Congressman to send out a circular to all the voters in the state--not just the Democrats, everybody--espousing the Democratic party's causes, not mentioning my candidacy at all. And the Times ran a big smear, and said it cost several million dollars, which is ridiculous, but it did work. In the last ten days, I began to lose. I found that out from Clem Whitaker of Campaigns Incorporated, who, in spite of the fact he is in support of Republicans, has always been for me, ever since the early Central Valley days.

Shearer: Did your association with the Central Valley Project bond issue--I mean, did the contacts and the camaraderie that you developed working on that carry over into your campaign?

Yorty: No, but I learned a lot.

Shearer: Did any of the people who helped financially support the Central Valley campaign become your backers?

Yorty: No. The Central Valley campaign was won on peanuts. We took up collections in Bakersfield and Fresno, and the farmers put in ten cents each. The PG&E was against it, and Clem Whitaker was the campaign manager for the Central Valley. And we won, of course.

Shearer: So it was for the farmers?

Yorty: Yes, and we won in spite of the money, and then Clem Whitaker was hired as the consultant for PG&E.

Shearer: Very interesting! I guess they learned something, too.

Yorty: They certainly did.

Relations with the Democratic Party and the CDC

Shearer: In the 1954 race, your constituency was mainly Democratic--the regular Democratic party. Did you feel that you had been cut off by the northern--?

Yorty: No, the CDC, and those they could influence.

Shearer: I see.

Yorty: But they didn't do it openly. I know they did it quietly, as they always have, against me. I think I could have won in spite of it, if we had had a strong candidate for governor. But Goodie Knight was running against Richard Graves, and I don't think many people now would even remember Richard Graves.

Shearer: The League of California Cities, I guess, was his prior activity.

Yorty: Yes. And he was a good fellow, and an able fellow, but not a good candidate, because he'd just been a Republican. The CDC put him in the race, and why, I don't know, unless they were for Goodie Knight.

Shearer: Have your feelings about the CDC or an organization such as the CDC--that is, a grassroots volunteer political club--changed over the years?

Yorty: A grassroots political club I've always been for. But not when infiltrated by Communists or run by Communists and left-wingers.

Shearer: How would you control that sort of thing?

Yorty: Well, if the grassroots understand what it is doing for the Democratic party, they're not for Communists. For instance, they wouldn't be for the "Yanks are not coming," and then suddenly, when the Russians would attack, demand a second front. That exposed a lot of Communists. One minute they're on one side, and the next minute on the other.

Shearer: Do you think it's possible that your arguments influenced some Democrats to move from a more isolationist position to one of intervention?

Yorty: I don't think so, because as Roosevelt said, "Our boys will never fight on foreign soil." People don't want to go to war voluntarily. They never could see it coming. And we didn't go to war in the Second World War voluntarily. We were attacked at Pearl Harbor by Japan, and Hitler declared war on us. But if we had declared war on Hitler--when I wanted to in 1940--the war would have been much shorter and a lot of fellows would have fully lived their lives out who were killed.

Shearer: I'm trying to think when Alan Cranston's book came out that was so critical of Hitler and as I recall, raising something of the same kind of warning that you voiced.

Yorty: Well, he would be against Hitler, but not necessarily against Stalin. And I was against both. There's a report I wrote, which you could probably get. I wrote it in 1940, I think, on both Hitler and Stalin.*

* California Legislative Assembly Relief Investigating Committee on Subversive Activities. Report of the Assembly Investigating Committee on Subversive Activities, Honorable Samuel William Yorty, Chairman. First printing 1940. Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1950. 52pp.

Shearer: Would you have a copy? I guess it's public--

Yorty: It's public. I've got it at home; I don't know where. You write to me and I'll try to send you one. You'd be very interested in it, I think.

Shearer: Yes, I'd like to see it.

Yorty: Because I didn't just stick with the State Relief Administration; I took on the whole Hitler-Stalin bunch.

Shearer: In 1956, when the CDC endorsed Richard Richards--now, you had John Despol in your corner. Did you have any other labor people, any labor unions who were backing you at that point?

Yorty: I probably did, but when I withdrew, practically, from the race, because it was "wired, stacked, rigged, and packed," I'll never forget that. A lot of people came to me and said, "Well, I'm glad somebody had the courage to tell them off."

Shearer: Who were the people who appreciated your withdrawal, or rather your having stated that--?

Yorty: Well, they didn't want me to withdraw, but they appreciated my telling that CDC off, because they could see the way it was going. The left-wingers were getting more and more control.

Shearer: Were these members of the regular Democratic party? How would you characterize the people who applauded your actions at that point?

Yorty: Oh, I think they were regular Democrats who had been lured into the organization and who were getting disillusioned, as I was.

Shearer: Into the Democratic party as an organization, or into CDC?

Yorty: They were Democrats, and they had joined the CDC, thinking it was the grassroots, but they found out it was a lot more than the grassroots.

Shearer: When did you pretty much terminate your association with the Democratic party per se?

Yorty: Well, about 1960, really, when I came out for Nixon against Kennedy. I did that not because I didn't like Kennedy--I liked him very much, I served in Congress with him--but I saw his father buying the nomination for his son Jack, and I didn't think that the presidency of the United States should ever be for sale.

Shearer: Was that the main point that you made?

Yorty: That's the main point I made. Of course, I had been for Lyndon Johnson.

Shearer: In '64?

Yorty: No, in '60.

Shearer: I see. He was a contender then too.

Yorty: I was very much influenced in that by Sam Rayburn, whom I loved. He was Speaker of the House, from Texas too, a wonderful man. That's how I got to know Lyndon Johnson, through Sam Rayburn. I was for him, but then he had no chance because the Kennedy money was just unlimited. The father was just determined to buy the presidency for his son.

Shearer: Was that mainly the issue that you concentrated on? You wrote a report or a pamphlet, "I Can't Take Kennedy," and that was the reason?

Yorty: Yes, that was the main theme.

Shearer: You didn't have any major disagreements on his policy?

Yorty: I don't remember any. I know I always personally liked him, and after his presidency, I saw him at the Gracie Mansion in New York. He said, "My old friend Sam, you wouldn't even support me for the presidency!" [laughter] He was a very friendly guy.

Shearer: How important do you think it is in California politics--or how important was it for your--to have connections in the Democratic party? Do you think that 1956 or 1960 kind of blew it?

Yorty: Well, I think that 1960 sort of blew it, because first Kennedy was elected and Nixon was defeated. That was in '60, wasn't it?

Shearer: Yes.

Yorty: And then after that, they'd always bring it up when I ran, that I was a Democrat, and they'd say, "He's not a very good Democrat anyway." And I really wasn't a very good Democrat after that. As a matter of fact, I probably never was just a Democrat; I was always kind of an independent. I tried to call things as I saw them, that's all.

Running for Mayor of Los Angeles

Shearer: You seemed to have no trouble winning the mayor's race in 1961. Your opponent was Norris Poulson.

Yorty: Norris Poulson was a Congressman when I was. We served on the same committee, and we were good friends.

Shearer: Really?

Yorty: As a matter of fact, when he ran for mayor the first time, he called me in and told me that he thought that I should run for mayor. I said I wasn't interested. Then the Los Angeles Times sent a note to Warren Francis, their Washington correspondent, and told him to tell Norris Poulson that he was running for mayor. They ordered him into the race, and they bossed him as they bossed a lot of the city. And that kind of disgusted me. So I was just practicing law then, because I'd been defeated for the Senate. I was thinking of running for mayor, and I went down to court one day, and I ran into a Negro friend of mine, a lawyer. It was Everett Porter. He's a very fine fellow. We sat down on the bench there at the courthouse, and he said to me, "Sam, why don't you run for mayor? We'll all support you." He was the counsel then for the United Baptist convention. Most Negroes are Baptists.

I said, "Well, I'll think about it." So I decided to run, and we took a little poll, and found out that my name recognition was still pretty high. I decided to run.

I got Eleanor Chambers, who had managed my 1949 campaign for the assembly, and I'd written Eleanor a little note and told her, "Don't get connected with any campaign; I may need you." I hadn't decided then, so I didn't say what.

Then I went down and announced my candidacy, and about five people went with me. That was all. They were the only ones who were for me then. When I got home, there was Eleanor Chambers with her bags all packed. She came down from Cambria, and she never went home until after I was elected. She managed the campaign, and of course, I made her the first woman deputy mayor in the city of Los Angeles.

Shearer: Was it unusual also at that time to have a woman handling your campaign?

Yorty: Very unusual. But she was a very unusual woman, a very able woman. And she loved politics. So when I was mayor, I ran the city and she ran the politics, because she loved politics, and I didn't like politics. I never have, really.

Shearer: You haven't liked politics? How do you separate the city from the politics?

Yorty: Well, I liked running the city, administering the city. But the politics--you know, you have to do a lot of things, helping assemblymen and others, councilmen. I don't care for all that. I just liked running the city. And she loved politics.

Shearer: And taking care of the assemblymen and the districts and so forth--what does that mean--massaging egos and making sure that--?

Yorty: Yes, making sure that you're on the right party. She knew who was running and what chance they had--I never paid any attention to that.

Shearer: She juggled calls and percentages--?

Yorty: And she talked to people. She was a remarkable woman.

Shearer: What is she doing now?

Yorty: She's dead. She was dead when I got beat. I probably wouldn't have been defeated if it wasn't for her death.

Shearer: Who handled your next campaign?

Yorty: The second one was against Jimmy Roosevelt, and the Los Angeles Times even supported me.

Shearer: Against Roosevelt?

Yorty: Yes.

Shearer: Why do you think that was?

Yorty: Well, I guess because they didn't want Roosevelt. I think they had to admit that I was doing a good job.

Accomplishments as Mayor

Shearer: What could you point to in that first term that sort of turned the trick, built up your constituency?

Yorty: Well, for one thing, I integrated the city government. There'd never been anything but token blacks on the commissions, and Latinos. I appointed them to all the important commissions. I appointed the first black--Everett Porter, this fellow I'd met at the courthouse. I've know him so well, I appointed him the first black police commissioner in the city of Los Angeles.

I appointed a Mexican-American, Dr. Bravo, to the police commission. Dr. Bravo was very much against Chief [William] Parker, but I appointed him. Before he died, he wanted to build a monument to Chief Parker--before Parker died, I mean. Dr. Bravo is still alive. I appointed a Mexican-American and a black person to the Civil Service Commission, which handles the employment, and the same on the public works commissions. A lot of others. I integrated the Los Angeles city government; [I was] the first one to do it.

Shearer: That's amazing.

Yorty: And then I ran it well financially. I don't remember what we built in the first term, but eventually I built the Los Angeles Zoo, although the bond issue had been passed under Poulson, but they were disputing where it should go. I got that solved.

Shearer: In Griffith Park?

Yorty: Yes. I invited Poulson to the opening of the zoo, and he came. Of course, I fixed up Pershing Square, which was a terrible dark place with big trees and everything. Women used to be insulted going alone there, and I opened it all up and made it all bright so now one police officer can watch it and women can park their cars in safety.

Of course, I built the Convention Center. I built the Art Center in Griffith Park and the Children's Art Center in Griffith Park. I fixed up the tower in City Hall, which was nothing but-- People used to go up there and look around, but I made it a beautiful place for the mayor to entertain. So many things, I can't remember them all.

Shearer: It seems as though you had fun.

Yorty: I did have fun. I liked being mayor. As long as I didn't have to do the politics! [laughter] Of course, I never had much regard for the mentality or the integrity of some city councilmen. Not all of them. So I never would cater to them, but I would have gotten along a lot better with them if I wanted to. I didn't have enough respect for them to do it.

Shearer: That didn't pose a problem to you in getting through the programs that you wanted?

Yorty: No. The Los Angeles Times said--Bill Thomas, the editor, said to me, "When you used to fight with the councilmen, you usually got what you wanted."

Shearer: When you went on to the next race--let's see. When Tom Bradley won--

Yorty: He lost the first time, when I was running for a third term. Then the fourth term, he won because he got the solid black vote, and half the whites didn't vote, and he got a lot of money from the left-wingers--some names I can't remember--oh, Norman Lear, who's now made a lot of money in the TV. I can't think of them. One fellow who sold Xerox--Pavlosky. He spent a lot of money. Then, of course, the left-wingers and the blacks. They [Bradley forces] got a majority [overall] but they got that solid black vote, which is kind of a disappointment to me, but I understood. They were having the chance to elect a black mayor.

The funny part of it was, [earlier] when the vacancy developed out in the district that Tom Bradley represented in the council, I heard that there was a black former policeman out there, and I thought that being a former policeman, he'd be good. So I recommended that they elect or appoint--I've forgotten which it was, now--Bradley. Chief Parker came to me and said, "You're making a bad mistake, because he was no good as a policeman and he'll be no good as a councilman."

Shearer: So what was your decision then?

Yorty: It was too late then. I'd already endorsed him. But I sort of lived to regret that, because after I beat him for a third term, he did nothing but sabotage me every place he could as a councilman.

Shearer: Let's see. Backing up here just a little bit to 1965, for instance--Eleanor Chambers--she was deputy mayor back then. Who handled your campaign against James Roosevelt?

Yorty: I don't remember. It wasn't much of a campaign. We won easily. We had money left over. They took out a \$50,000 insurance policy on me for my wife, which I appreciated, because we'd always had threats. I'd always given up my law practice to go into low-paying federal jobs or low-paying politics. It wasn't like it is now. We didn't have much reserve, so they took out this policy so I wouldn't be like [George] Moscone, if you know that situation. I felt very comfortable about that. That was made a big issue in my campaign for a fourth term. There's a fellow named Joel Wachs that

Yorty: somehow found out from somebody in the insurance company about it, and they made a big issue of it. Actually, I don't think it should have been a big issue, because I think when you're married, your wife should have some security in case anything happens to you. Of course, I was always threatened, you know. Nothing happened, but I was always threatened.

Shearer: Where did the threats come from?

Yorty: Oh, I don't know. There's so many. The police called me to tell me--

##

Shearer: Did you change your lifestyle significantly in response to the threats you received as mayor?

Yorty: Oh no, I never did, I never worried about it. I always figured that gangsters only killed gangsters and I'd never had anything to do with them, so I wasn't worried about it.

Bucking Anti-War Sentiment in the 1968 Presidential Race

Yorty: But when I ran for president, of course I had the only statewide paper in New Hampshire for me. He's a very conservative guy, Bill Loeb. But I was a Democrat then and I was, again, telling people that we should fight the war in Vietnam and win it and not let the Communists take over. And I knew what I was talking about and I was in direct touch with Admiral Sharp who was head of the Pacific and later, Admiral Kane. They told me what they wanted to do, but of course they couldn't get McNamara, who would always talk Johnson out of doing anything.

Shearer: This was 1968?

Yorty: I think so, yes. So again I found myself defending the war when it was very popular in the Democratic party to be against it. And McGovern, of course, carried New Hampshire, or he cost Muskie so many votes that he got a lot of prestige. But the anti-war gang prevailed and of course now, everybody knows that all Southeast Asia, the part that was formerly under France, has gone Communist--that's Laos and Cambodia and 40 million Vietnamese--when many of them had come from the north. When north and south was divided and the north went Communist, many people from the north went south and were trapped there when we quit supporting the South Vietnamese.

Yorty: If we had kept supporting them, they could have fought the North Vietnamese off, but we withdrew our support and turned it over to the Communists.

People still don't understand. They don't know. But they will, because that's a real blow to us, that Southeast Asia there has gone Communist. I'm sorry about it, but I lost two elections trying to defend wars, not that I like war any better than anybody else; probably less because I've been through one. But you have to stand up sometimes and we should have stood up. We could have won the war in two months in South Vietnam if we'd just invaded North Vietnam.

We gave them the sanctuary up there and they could prepare and strike when they wanted to, and then we'd always be on the defensive.

Opposing Fellow Democrats

Shearer: If I can just squeeze in two quick questions-- One is part of the other. In the 1966 election, the gubernatorial election, you opposed Pat Brown in the primary. It brings up a general question. It seems to me that often in your career, you've been in the field of candidates in what seemed to many people to be a no-win situation: that you couldn't win and it would only deflect votes from your fellow Democrats.

Yorty: Well, against Pat Brown, I could have won if I had had more money. If people had realized how many votes I was going to get--I think I got about a million votes and he got 1,300,000 and he spent a lot of money. So it was not as hopeless as it seemed, but it turned out that I did get beaten, of course.

Shearer: How did you justify these entries into the field? I mean, you were the dark horse. Was it that you felt that the issue was--

Yorty: Sometimes it was an issue, like with Pat Brown, I just didn't think he was a good governor.

Shearer: Has your political philosophy changed over the years?

Yorty: I don't think my philosophy's changed so much as the Democratic party has. When they nominated McGovern, that was too much for me and I became a Republican. Same as John Connally did. The party's gone too far left-wing-- Of course, then Nixon swamped him; he only carried one state, Massachusetts.

Shearer: Thank you very, very much for all this time you've given me.

Yorty: I wish I had more, but--

Shearer: I do too. One thing I want to ask you, on or off tape, is how did you happen to get the Finnish-American Friendship medal?

Yorty: They gave me that for my international efforts to bring world peace and to fight Communism. The Finns, of course, they call Finlandia now because the Communists dominate them but they sure don't like the Communists. The same thing, the Polish people don't either.

When I was in Poland, they told me privately--some rather prominent Poles--that "99 percent of us hate the Communists."

Shearer: You have a very strong interest in world affairs. Has that always been true or does that stem from your congressional days?

Yorty: No, I always have had.

Shearer: Well, thank you.

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Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Lucretia Engle

CLAIR ENGLE AS CAMPAIGNER AND STATESMAN

An Interview Conducted by
Amelia R. Fry
in 1977



Lu and Clair Engle at Labor Day rodeo,
September 7, 1953, Bishop, California

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

The untimely death of northern California water spokesman Clair Engle in 1964 cut short a distinguished career in the U.S. Senate, with calamitous impact on that year's Senatorial election and perhaps also on the state's Democratic party.

This interview with his widow, Lucretia Engle, provides touching insight into the Senator's last days and the political maneuvering that resulted in Pierre Salinger being named to Engle's Senate seat and later losing the November election to George Murphy. As her husband's secretary before and after their marriage and constant campaign aide, Mrs. Engle gives a vivid picture of his years as representative for the Second Congressional District, including the trips when Engle flew his own plane to stay in touch with constituents from Crescent City to Bakersfield. In support of his 1958 Senate campaign, she traveled on her own and comments, "we were barely past the period when the wife of a man in politics was seen and not heard."

Arrangements for the interview were made when Mrs. Engle and the interviewer met at a dinner in honor of former members of Congress at the Pacific Union Club in San Francisco. The narrative itself was recorded on October 7, 1977, at the spacious home of Mrs. Engle's cousin in the quiet country-like setting of Saratoga. Vivacious and friendly, Mrs. Engle settled the interviewer on a couch and herself took a side chair, which framed her petiteness.

She willingly responded to questions, giving no coy answers. When it was a question she felt she could not address, she said so--sometimes with a knowing twinkle and a mischievous smile that the tape could not record. For example, it was obvious that she remembered much more about the phone calls from Stanley Mosk in 1964 than she would say. She did, however, muster her courage and sail into the painful narration of her husband's brain tumor, his fight for recovery and for retention of his seat in the Senate, and finally his death.

The interview opened with the question of where Senator Engle's papers had been deposited, where those she retained would go, including reference to films the Senator had made on issues he particularly wished to communicate to constituents. By 1980, when Mrs. Engle reviewed the interview transcript and returned it to The Bancroft Library, arrangements had been made for the materials to be deposited in the Tehama County Library in Red Bluff, California, where a special "Engle Room" had been provided. The transcript, first reviewed in this office by Gabrielle Morris, is largely as it was recorded, with only minor emendations and corrections of name spellings by Mrs. Engle. Some materials concerning Senator Engle's career are in the appendix to this interview; a few others are in the supporting documents to the Knight-Brown era oral history series in The Bancroft Library.

Later, in August of 1978, the interviewer visited Mrs. Engle in Washington, D.C., in the same spacious home on Capitol Hill that they had had during her husband's tenure in the Senate, and had lunch with her in the Senate Dining Room. Senators from both sides of the aisle dropped by the table to greet Mrs. Engle with respect and affection. She chatted about interests she and Clair Engle had shared, among them history salted with a proper skepticism and captured by a typically salty phrase of the Senator's. "History," he had said, "is like whiskey; it depends on who the distiller is."

Amelia Fry, interviewer
Gabrielle Morris, editor

13 April 1981
Regional Oral History Office
University of California at Berkeley

I CALIFORNIA'S SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

[Date of Interview: 6 October 1977]##

Campaigning by Plane

- Fry: Did your husband ever find his name a problem, politically, with people mistaking his name for a woman's? It might be something that showed up in some of the polls.
- Engle: Yes, but in this instance it was Grace Englebright, Clair Engle, and Jessie Mayo. Of course, Clair Engle and Jessie Mayo were men, but you see the names could have been women's names just as well; so a dear old miner thought there wasn't a man running, and he wasn't going to bother to vote. But Clair won that special election and that started him.
- Fry: You didn't even know him then?
- Engle: No.
- Fry: How did you two meet? Were you living in Washington?
- Engle: Yes, I was living in Washington. Actually, we had--
- Fry: I have this on now. I want you to know that.
- Engle: It's a funny thing how you don't actually remember--I don't actually remember how we met except we were both interested in flying. I was just learning to fly. He, of course, was a very good flyer at that time and used to go out and practice flying to keep up his proficiency. Flying, like anything else, you have to use it or you lose it.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page 42.

- Fry: You didn't meet in the backwash of a Piper cub then?
- Engle: Not actually, but I think where we first did meet was probably out at Congressional Flying Field because we were both in the Congressional Flying Club; there was a very active Congressional Flying Club at that time.
- Fry: That was made up of congressmen?
- Engle: Congressmen and administrative assistants. They were all people from Capitol Hill.
- Fry: In what way were you connected with Capitol Hill at that time?
- Engle: I was a congressional secretary.
- Fry: To whom?
- Engle: To Jack Anderson who at that time was a congressman from San Juan Bautista.
- Fry: Did you help Clair campaign while he was in the House of Representatives?
- Engle: Oh, yes. The district being so large, it was just constantly--well, as every House member will tell you, when you run every two years it's more or less a constant campaign. As soon as they adjourn, you come West and start to campaign, and, of course, he flew so the two of us would fly from spot to spot. We would start out--he tried to plan it so that we'd go to the farthest reaches of the district first, so we'd get there before the weather got bad. Once the weather gets too bad, of course, you can't fly. Then you've got to drive and over those mountains! The district is somewhat changed now, but it was the Second Congressional District. Bizz Johnson represents the second district now.*
- Fry: Yes, he followed your husband, didn't he and he's still in?
- Engle: Right. When Clair went to the Senate, Bizz came from the state senate to the House of Representatives.
- Fry: This is how many counties?

*Johnson represented the Second Congressional District from 1958-1980.

Engle: It's in the Shasta area. At the time Clair represented it, it was nineteen counties. I don't know what it is now. But at that time it ran from the Oregon border, down the Sierra Nevadas and very much the shape of the state of California.

Fry: Right in the middle?

Engle: Yes. Well, not the middle but we bordered Nevada. It just follows the Sierra Nevadas right down to the San Bernardino County line at that time and included Mt. Lassen, Shasta, Yosemite, Tahoe, Death Valley.

Fry: And the Sacramento Valley?

Engle: No.

Fry: Did you have some agricultural areas?

Engle: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Timber, cattle, orchards--prunes, peaches, olives, Corning olives; lumber, of course, was very big. The largest town was Chico, I believe. I think Chico had the heaviest population. But it was mountain-valley, small towns, wonderful--we had a marvelous time campaigning because-- We didn't really call it campaigning. It was staying in touch with the people is what it was.

Fry: Sort of visiting around?

Engle: Yes, but it was great fun because in the fall we'd come out and do the county fairs, and because we had the plane we could sometimes make three or four county fairs a week. If you hit it just right, you could do a fair and get a rodeo or two. At a county fair you find people pretty well gathered together in a group, where you could find so many more people without having to travel so far. They'd be located centrally.

Fry: In a particularly hot campaign which you may or may not have had, did you ever split up and each of you fly a plane around? Could you do mountain flying?

Engle: I felt that I could have landed the plane, and that was the whole purpose of keeping up my flying: to be able to land the plane in case of an emergency. But as far as taking a small plane and flying that mountain area myself, no, I didn't do it, and I wasn't really anxious to.

Fry: Yes, I hear taking off is quite different in the mountains since the air is thinner and--

Engle: And at those airports the runways are short, and the weather changes very fast on you. More than once we had to turn around and go back because all of a sudden where it had seemed to be perfectly clear, it was closing in.

Fry: It just suddenly comes in?

Engle: Yes.

Fry: In that period between '48 when you two were married and '58, did he have any elections that were real threats to him?

Engle: Every election is a threat.

Fry: I mean any candidates that really--

Engle: That came close?

Fry: Yes, and got a lot of funds.

Engle: I don't think really. You always run scared. Anyone who doesn't, in my opinion, isn't as sensible as they ought to be about politics. You always run scared because you never, you just never know. But I don't feel that there was any serious threat. Of course, as long as there was cross-filing, except I believe for the first time, Clair always had both nominations in the primary, so that your real campaign came in the primary.

Fry: That gave you an opportunity in the general election to get out and work.

Engle: Yes, of course, but even if you knew you already had it, then you had to stay with the people. You wanted a good-sized vote.

Fry: Was he always a Democrat? Was he a progressive Republican turned Democrat?

Engle: Do you know, I can't quite remember. It seems to me that maybe--I can't say. I can't say. From the time I knew him he was a Democrat, yes. It may have been that when he was a very young man that he may have but I don't know. I was a Republican when we married. He said, "Now, you don't have to change your registration until you really feel like it."

I felt that I loved my husband, his judgment I felt was good, and certainly it would seem rather odd if he couldn't convince his own wife that his way of thinking was the right way, and so I did choose to change my registration. I became a Democrat and am a Democrat.

Fry: Did you really vote Democrat after that?

Engle: Of course. I'm a Democrat and have been ever since we were married; but up until that time, I was a Republican. I came from a Republican family and was raised a Republican.

Fry: Are you a southern Californian?

Engle: No, no, no. Northern Californian. I was born in Tulare but raised in Santa Clara Valley. Tulare is still considered northern California--anything north of the Tehachapis.

Fry: That's right. That's kind of the end of his district, I think, marked the border, didn't it? The southern end of it?

Engle: Areas north of there. But anything north of the Tehachapis is sort of--that seems to be or at least used to be the dividing line of the interest in this state, and the south at that time had the heavy population.

Fry: Yes, at that time. [chuckles]

Engle: North of the Tehachapis the people seemed to have--their interests were more nearly alike.

Water Legislation

Fry: That reminds me of something that I picked up. There was a group of eight northern California counties in 1956 that got together and were pushing for Senator Engle to put in a bill for them to secede from the state and form a new state because of the water issue. They didn't want to lose their water to southern California in the state water plan.

Engle: It seems to me that at the time every once in a while (and I don't know how many years intervened) some part of northern California would come up with the idea that the state should be divided in two. Oh, yes, there was serious suggestions that the northern part of the state could get along nicely without the south.

Fry: This was a story in the December 9 New York Times of '56. I didn't find it followed up anywhere, but I wondered if Senator Engle, because of his interest in water and reclamation, gave it serious thought at the time as a number of Democrats now are.

Engle: He gave it thought, of course. I don't know how serious. Water, of course, was always his really main driving interest.

Fry: Could you define where he stood on water issues in terms of the Central Valley Plan and so forth; whether it should be a state project or a federal project?

Engle: Well, the Central Valley was a proven--of course, it's the heart of the water supply for the state of California. There was a time--Clair had a book called the Central Valley papers.

Fry: Yes, I noticed that.

Engle: He had gathered together all of the background papers pertaining to the Central Valley, two volumes I believe, of the Central Valley papers.

Fry: The documents.

Engle: Yes, the Central Valley Project Documents [1956-57]. He authored a major portion of the additions to the Central Valley Project.

Fry: Right, and was constantly working, I guess, for its expansion.

Engle: For its expansion and, above all, for the preservation of water, because a state really flounders without water. Your agriculture dries up just as it did in the Owens Valley when they sold off their water rights. That used to be the horrible example to people who were wondering about how important water was, to drive over, or to fly over rather, the Owens Valley and see what had become of an area that had at one time been lush and green.

Fry: His district encompassed both the haves and the have-nots in water resources, so he must have had to--

Engle: Yes, but mostly it was--[tape interrupted by serving of coffee]

Fry: The other things on water that were, I guess, the most prominent in what he did were the passage of the Small Reclamation Projects Act supplements when Eisenhower was still president. According to my notes, there were two of these primarily. One was to provide interest-free loans for irrigation districts to extend or build new projects. Then there was another bill to set up a distribution-systems program for interest-free loans to irrigation districts that were receiving their water from federal reclamation projects, so that then they could construct their own water distribution systems.

Were you working in his office at the time or anything so that you were acquainted with these bills?

Engle: Yes, I was always in the office, but of course a great deal of the--when you get down to this sort of thing it was handled by a legislative expert and also by the committee people.

Before he went to the Senate, Clair was chairman of the full committee [Interior and Insular Affairs]. He was also chairman of the Irrigation and Reclamation Subcommittee then, but we didn't get

Engle: as much of the nuts and bolts of the legislation in the office as they had in the committee offices. He had his own people on the committee staff. You're asking me to recall something that I haven't even thought about for years, so I can't--if I had had a little advance notice of this I could have gone through files I've got at home.

II DEALING WITH SENATOR ENGLE'S PAPERS

Fry: Do you have a lot of papers at home?

Engle: Oh, yes. I'm ashamed to say I have a whole room full of transfer cases that I still have not gone through.

Fry: What do you mean, "transfer cases?"

Engle: Transfer file cases.

Fry: Oh, transferring from office to home.

Engle: Yes.

Fry: I thought this was another big legislative issue--transfer water resources into the agriculture department or something!

Engle: Well, we had a very short time in which to make so many decisions as to what to do. One doesn't want to make mistakes and yet I don't know how you can avoid making mistakes when you have to very suddenly make a decision to send one place or another, so I still have some-- I hope that they're mostly personal papers. The active cases that were ongoing in our office I turned over to Pierre Salinger so that there would be no slippage at all in an active case.

Background files on legislation that my husband had introduced and had been enacted into law and so forth, those files should have been all kept together and I think sent over to Chico State or I believe somewhere to Berkeley.

Fry: At the Bancroft?

Engle: I'd have to look up in my files. I have a file at home that tells me where we sent out--we were sending out truckloads of things. I had seven offices that I had to close; and when a member of the Senate dies, his successor is appointed immediately. Clair's successor, Pierre Salinger, was appointed the day after Clair's funeral.

Engle: When I arrived back in Washington from the funeral out here, that day Pierre Salinger was being sworn in, which means that you do have to sort of stir yourself to get space ready. Then, too, as would be natural, the top people in the office are looking for other employment. They're not available to help you pack up.

Fry: So it's more of a one-woman show.

Engle: And you find yourself left with the clerks who don't know as much about it as one would hope for. They did the best they could, but they just weren't as knowledgeable.

Fry: When future scholars use this, they'll want to know where the relevant papers are.

Engle: Some of it went to the Red Bluff library because--and right now I cannot tell you who it was. I think maybe it was his brother said that he thought someone or other at the Red Bluff library would like to have some of Clair's papers available there. So a portion of them went there. Whether they've ever done anything with them or not I don't have any way of knowing. I don't know.

All these years I have in storage still a footlocker of television tapes.

Fry: Video tapes?

Engle: Yes, and I don't know what in the name of conscience to do with the thing. They're as heavy as lead. At the time I didn't know what to do with them and so I thought I'll put them, not knowing, and being compelled to vacate after all. You have to turn over the space. I put them in footlockers and took them. I also have about two footlockers full of pictures.

Fry: Those must be good campaign pictures and things like that over that whole period.

Engle: Well, there were so many pictures taken of men who were prominent at the time, and they were inscribed to Clair; Clair would have them framed in the standard little black frame and hung on the wall over there. We had seven offices and there were lots of pictures of people on the walls. I didn't know what to do with them. You don't want to just throw out something like that and yet, what to do. So, again, I put those in trunks and those are still in storage.*

*In a letter dated November 17, 1980, Mrs. Engle said she intended to send all remaining material on her husband's career to the Tehama County Library in Red Bluff, California.

Fry: What are the videotapes about? Do you know?

Engle: Offhand, I can't tell you. But every once in a while--you do know we have a recording room there at the Capitol, and it was made available to the members if they wanted to cut a tape on a special project.

Fry: For showing back home.

Engle: Right. So at this distance, both geographically and timewise, I don't know exactly what's in there. Some of them I suppose were campaign tapes. I don't know. But I know there's reel after reel of videotapes.

Fry: It seems that if they can be indexed or something, they're useful in--

Engle: Oh, I'm sure they're all marked in their cans. I'm sure they're all marked as to what they are but I wish to have--at some time, if anyone was ever going to be in Washington who was the least bit interested, I would get that stuff out of storage. I would be delighted to get it out of storage, go through it and make disposition of it. I live in terror of the time that I might be on a plane that will fall or get hit by a truck or something. What an awful mess it would be for my executor to try and straighten stuff out.

Fry: This is not any of his official congressional papers, right? It's everything else? Personal papers?

Engle: The personal papers are in my house. In the footlocker in storage are the tapes. These, I think, are mostly while he was in the Senate, so they would be of statewide interest. If he was particularly interested in a certain bill of something like that that he wanted to tell the people of California about, and he made a tape about that for showing, there they are.

Fry: There must be tapes for most of the major issues.

Engle: All I remember is that the Security Storage who stored them for me complained bitterly about the weight of the trunk and what in the world did I have in it.

Fry: It's one trunk?

Engle: It's a footlocker.

Fry: In the case of a Senator like Clair Engle, if could even have national application because he was dealing there with some issues that were not just Californian. So it should be put somewhere where it could be used in the future.

- Engle: I have the feeling, Amelia, that we're all string savers at heart. But at the same time you really truly don't want to get just bogged down with everything, but I was really afraid to throw anything away for fear that I shouldn't, that somebody could use.
- Fry: I think somebody who has the archival perspective could go through there and tell you exactly what should absolutely be saved and then those things that you can choose.
- Engle: Also, someone who is not emotionally involved. Those papers on the top floor in the back guest room, I've tried over and over to start going through them. But then it becomes too difficult emotionally, and I have to stop.
- Fry: I should think you wouldn't want to throw away anything.
- Engle: Well, this is the problem. I keep thinking, well, this is good background on whatever it is. On the other hand, I want to be extremely sure that there is nothing of a very personal nature about somebody else, that really ought to be destroyed. You never want things to get in the wrong [hands].
- Fry: Is any of this available to Steven Sayles, who's writing on Sacramento Valley politics?
- Engle: So far, no. About two years ago he was back here. He called on me one afternoon. He said that he wanted to come back, I think it was going to be the next winter. I told him this material I had and that I would be delighted to have somebody go over it with me. I was not at all sure whether he was--well, I wasn't quite ready to simply say, "Have at it," carte blanche. He was just doing a paper for himself.*
- Fry: That's a little different.
- Engle: It didn't seem a broad enough based thing, and he would have no use for any of it other than to consult at that time.
- Fry: His own focus.

*Monograph on the forces that shaped Engle's career and upper Sacramento Valley politics. ANCR, Chico, California, 1976.

Engle: Right, and it would be of interest for him to read and put aside. What I'm talking about is something where the material could be lodged, instead of in the storeroom. If it's not of interest to anyone, then there's no point in my hanging on to it.

Fry: It sounds quite valuable, actually. What I'm quite concerned about is that it not be spread out in too many different places.

Engle: So you don't have to hop to three different locations.

Fry: Unfortunately, not too many scholars fly their own plane.

Engle: This, of course, is a bit of a problem. Clair graduated from Hastings. He went to Chico State in his prelegal, and then he took his degree at Hastings.

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Engle: I will try to find the covering file that tells me where everything is. His personal secretary was very sweet; she stayed on just as long as she possibly could to help me out. She was great at making lists. I'm sure that she made a list of what (I hope by file) of what went where. But again, when they're breathing down the back of your neck for, "Please, can we have this room?"

Fry: That must be terrible.

Engle: Right. And you should; you simply can't both sit in the same chair and you just must--we had, I think, officially thirty days. I know that the staff is kept on salary for thirty days, and I think I have thirty days. But right away I had to get one office empty so Pierre would at least have a place to hang his hat! As soon as we could move things in, we kept compressing until we finally were in just one room ourselves. Well, it gets awfully easy to say, "Oh, well."

III ELECTION TO THE U.S. SENATE, 1958

Republican Big Switch

Fry: I'm going to move on to his first campaign as Senator, and one of the first questions in my mind was how far back were preparations made for his candidacy. I think in some of the Stevenson campaigns, I suppose the second Stevenson campaign--

Engle: The '56 campaign?

Fry: Yes. There was care taken to see that your husband got some visibility in that campaign. He must have had a high position or made some speeches or something in preparation for a possible candidacy for the Senate in '58.

Engle: I don't actually think, Amelia, that he was thinking of '58 at the time. He was devoted to Adlai Stevenson. I don't know whether he was--he had a position of some sort in the Stevenson campaign for California, and when the Governor would come out and appear in northern California we were always there. I don't think Clair really had so much in the back of his mind that he was going to run for the Senate then.

I don't actually know when the idea was born. As he used to say, he just came to the conclusion that he had been in the House for sixteen years. He was committee chairman, and there's always a feeling, I suppose, that if you join a smaller group, you have a louder voice. Instead of being one of 435, if you're one of 98 you can be heard a little more clearly. So I don't know really at what point, but I do know that he had made the decision--he polled the California delegation, the Democratic delegation, to see if anybody else was interested in running for the Senate in 1958. They weren't. He used to laugh and say he wasn't sure whether they thought that inasmuch as he was a boy from the northern mountains, he would make a good sacrificial goat.

But, anyway, he finally came to the conclusion that if he was ever going to go for the Senate that would be the time. This was before Bill Knowland decided that he wanted to be governor. This was when it

Engle: appeared that Bill Knowland would be the opponent, and Bill Knowland had the time before been elected by I think the largest majority ever received statewide. So it was a gamble. It was a gamble for someone who came from a small town like Red Bluff to be running against a man from the city; but nothing ventured, nothing gained. Then, of course, came the fantastic switch when Senator Knowland was adamant that he wanted to be governor or else, and Goodwin Knight had said that he would be nothing if not a candidate to succeed himself to the governorship; but then the next thing you knew he was a candidate for the Senate.

Fry: So that made everything fall into place a lot better, I guess.

Engle: Well, it certainly made it interesting, because Goodie Knight had a name identification that was just not to be believed it was so great. He had as lieutenant governor traveled every highway, every byway. We would go to a little miners' meeting up in the northern part of the state, and there would be Lieutenant Governor Goodwin Knight. He covered this state like a blanket, literally. He had astounding name identification.

Building Name Recognition

Fry: What did you do to give Clair Engle greater name recognition?

Engle: Well, we just traveled as hard as we could.

Fry: Did you fly?

Engle: Oh, yes. He took every speaking engagement he could possibly fit in and, of course, we tried to get (as he used to call it) the multiplier, by getting on television or radio; and you pray a lot. We used to fly into Burbank late at night, and you'd see those miles and miles of lights, and he'd say, "My dear, how am I ever going to get into everyone's kitchen?"

Fry: Well, the multipliers cost a lot of money.

Engle: The multipliers cost money, indeed they do.

Fry: One of my questions was who helped you raise money?

Engle: I don't know exactly now. I don't remember who the chairmen were. When we got into a statewide campaign, Don Bradley took over--I think he finally became pretty much chief honcho. But in every little byway, you have your campaign organization, you hope. At least someone has been named, and you hope that they are doing their best for you. Of course, our big problem was in the north where the population was sparse--

Fry: But you were well known.

Engle: We were well known, and the lovely thing, I always said, was that the people of the north and of the mountain areas are like the area in which they live. They're literally the backbone of the state. They're good, solid people, and you always know where they stand, whatever their registration. If they're with you, they're with you and if they're not with you, they say so. But once you get them, you've got them. For sixteen years his predecessor, Harry Englebright, who was a Republican, had represented the Second Congressional District. Then Clair Engle, a Democrat, represented the Second Congressional District for sixteen years. Many of the same people who had supported Harry Englebright supported Clair Engle because they went with the man, and, of course, when the population isn't so great you have a chance to really get acquainted. They feel they know their man.

Fry: It's very much an individual decision rather than one based on party.

Engle: Yes, it's a one on one thing.

Fry: So I should think that the strategy probably was that you would simply visit those counties and nail them down early in the campaign and then go on to Burbank areas and things like that. Is that what you did?

Engle: Yes. We had an apartment in San Francisco and one in Los Angeles. Of course, you must never neglect the areas you already have, because no one appreciates that. No one wants to be taken for granted. But at the same time you've got to spend as much time as you can--we had billboards. We had a marvelous billboard!

Fry: There was a story in some paper that I read where Governor Knight was complaining about the size of Clair Engle's billboard, so I wanted you to tell me about them.

Engle: I didn't know that Goodie had ever gotten around to doing that. He got around to doing lots of things. But I just thought it was a great billboard.

Fry: Why?

Engle: Well, it was just the way it was--

Fry: Was it the picture here on the campaign pamphlet?

Engle: Right. We used California colors, blue and gold.

Fry: Is that what the billboard said, "Engle will make a strong U.S. Senator?"

Engle: Yes.



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CLAIR ENGLE ON THE ISSUES

WATER

"There is a way to break our north-south deadlock on water. That way is to program enough water development in the next 15 to 20 years to satisfy the needs of both. Federal loans and grants will make it possible."

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"We have a recession in the midst of continuing inflation. This indicates our economy is out of joint. We need vigorous government action to end this recession. We also need intensive government investigation — and action — on the 'administered prices' at the base of inflation."

CIVIL RIGHTS

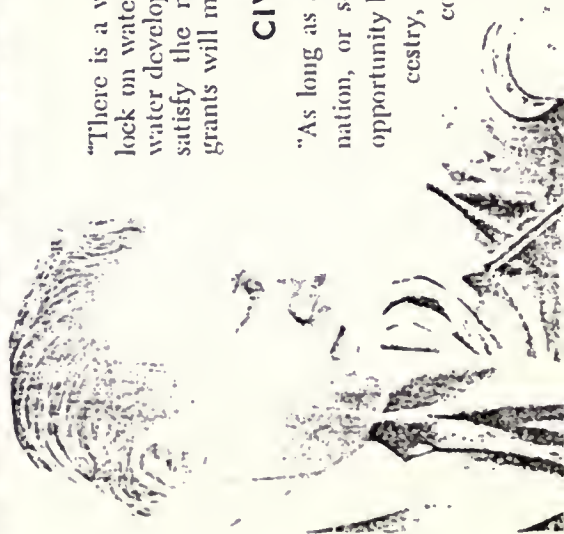
"As long as a single case of discrimination, or segregation, or denial of opportunity based on color, creed, ancestry, or religion occurs in this country, by so much does democracy fall short of its promise."

FOREIGN POLICY

"We must be strong. But armed might alone is not enough. We must try to find those areas of agreement which, honorably implemented, will lead us step by step back from the brink of the holocaust upon which we now stand."

LABOR

"We need legislation to insure democracy in labor unions, such as the Kennedy-Ives Bill which I supported, and will again. We must also remove the union-busting provisions from the Taft-Hartley Law. I oppose Proposition 18. It would provide neither rights nor work."



"Engle's entire record in Congress is that of a progressive who has turned his back on the extremists of either side . . . his achievements in the field of water are in sharp contrast to those of his opponent . . . he has been able to chalk up such a record that Capital political writers rate him as one of the 10 most effective congressmen . . . the logical—even the compelling choice for U.S. Senator. . . ."

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—Sacramento Bee

"Engle has set an example of zeal and determination in the Arizona-California battle in Congress that might well be copied by some of his Southern California colleagues . . . Engle has taken a wide and intelligent view of this whole vital matter and has devoted great energy to it."

—Los Angeles Times

"Respected . . . capable . . . one of the most experienced men in the field . . . the probity and energy of Mr. Engle on behalf of California cannot be questioned."

—Bakersfield Californian

" . . . strong for civil rights . . . an outstanding leader of the California delegation."

—Fresno Bee

" . . . the highest reputation for defending the rights of the people . . . devoted public servant."

—Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen News

"By any standard of record, of vigor, of conscience, of progressiveness, Rep. Clair Engle should be elected U.S. Senator."

—Sunnyvale Standard

"Engle has earned the support of the state's senior citizens and blind men and women."

—National Welfare Advocate

"Engle would give the golden state north and south alike outstanding representation in the United States Senate. He should be elected."

—Vallejo Times Herald

"He blazes a trail of accomplishment . . . he is literally a pioneer in the field of devising methods—honest and hard hitting methods—of getting a good job done for the people he represents. . . ."

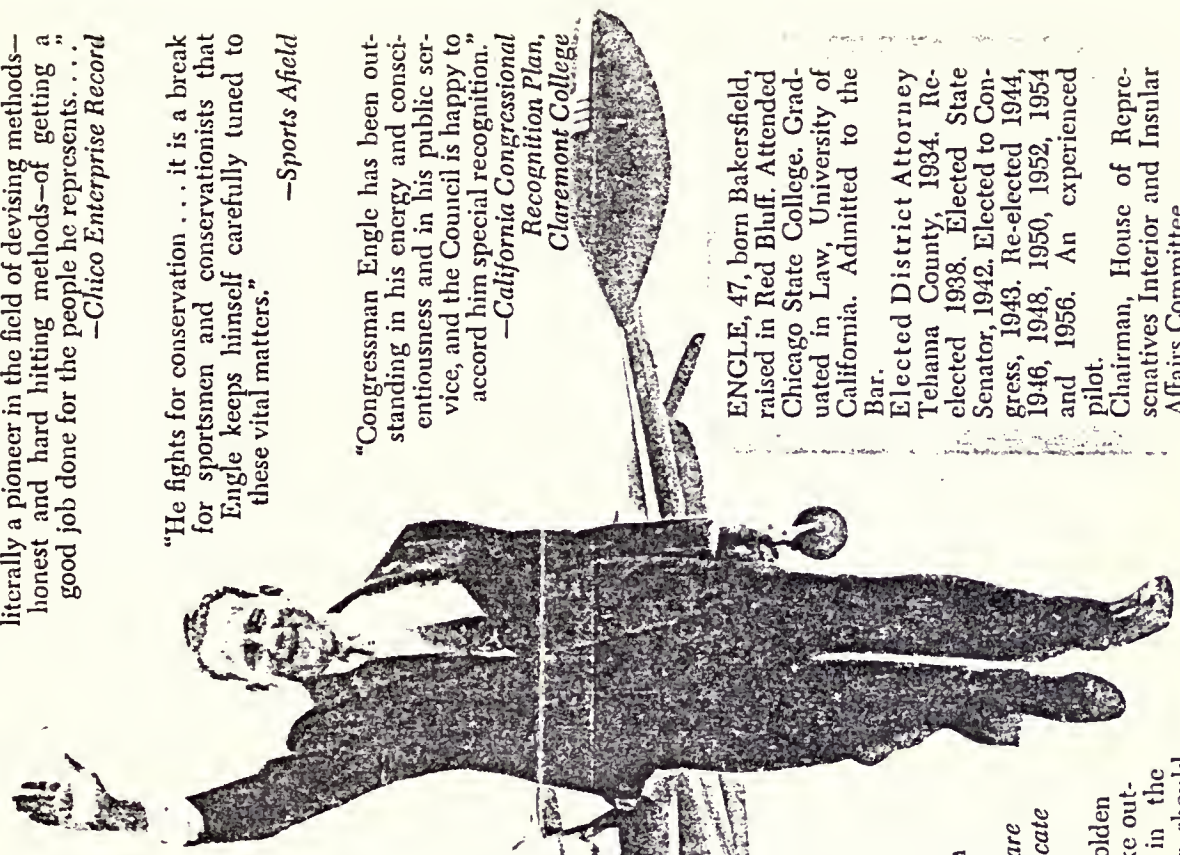
—Chico Enterprise Record

"He fights for conservation . . . it is a break for sportsmen and conservationists that Engle keeps himself carefully tuned to these vital matters."

—Sports Afield

"Congressman Engle has been outstanding in his energy and conscientiousness and in his public service, and the Council is happy to accord him special recognition."

—California Congressional Recognition Plan, Claremont College



ENGLE, 47, born Bakersfield, raised in Red Bluff. Attended Chicago State College. Graduated in Law, University of California. Admitted to the Bar.

Elected District Attorney Tehama County, 1934. Re-elected 1938. Elected State Senator, 1942. Elected to Congress, 1943. Re-elected 1944, 1946, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1954 and 1956. An experienced pilot.

Chairman, House of Representatives Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. Married, one daughter.

Fry: Then you used this in the pamphlet.

Engle: That was our main billboard. I still have (probably in one of those trunks) one of the papers for the billboard.

Fry: The whole billboard paper?

Engle: Yes.

Fry: Wouldn't that be great at some celebration up in the north counties or wherever at some point?

Engle: We tried to keep one of everything as a sample because we knew that one campaign is never just like the other and your methods change. We wanted to have a sample of everything that had been used--the little buttons, bumper stickers, quarter cards. Those things people used to use a great deal and don't any more.

In this campaign billboards were big. They were an important thing and to get the placement of your billboard as you were coming off the freeway entering San Francisco or into Los Angeles, that was very important.

Organization and Fundraising; Other Primary Candidates

Fry: Going back to the funds, I have in my notes that the funds in the primary, at least some of the people who helped dig up funds for the primary, were the ones that you would expect: Al Gatov, Ellie Heller, Bill Malone. But also Jimmy Rudin, and I didn't know who he was. Bill Malone, of course, was always the big backbone of that and the Hellers; and Al Gatov was in shipping.

Engle: Yes, he married Libbie Smith.

Fry: Yes, but maybe you could tell me about both Jimmy Rudin and Al Gatov because Gatov was not usually politically active.

Engle: Al served on a committee for Clair.

Fry: Yes, I think he was the head of the committee.

Engle: Yes. It seems to me that George Killion served on the committee too and Dan Kimball down south. I think George was on one of the committees in the north and Dan was on one down south. Oh, dear, there was a pair of brothers.

Fry: Not the Burtons?

Engle: No, no, no. These were in Los Angeles. They were not in politics themselves but they were very helpful.

Fry: What were they in? Were they in insurance or real estate or something like that?

Engle: Probably real estate. Boyer--Mark and his brother's name was Al Boyer. Then in San Francisco in the Chinese community were the Chows, Albert and Jack Chow. Jack Chow is an attorney. I don't remember whether Albert Chow--well, he was in business: restaurants, and I think maybe they're in some importing business. But they were just delightful and very helpful in the Chinese community.

Fry: In doing what we might call precinct work or in fundraising? There is really a lot of money available in the Chinese community.

Engle: Gosh, Amelia, I don't know. All I know is that you always contacted Jack and Albert Chow if you were going to be in San Francisco. They were part of our San Francisco contact, and you knew that you could get a reading on how the Chinese community was feeling on certain issues and so forth by talking to the Chows.

Fry: . In several reports about this, the analyses talk about why Clair Engle got the nomination and the candidacy from some other pretty strong people like Alan Cranston and Peter Odegard, the professor of political science who didn't start until later. What can you tell me about them?

Engle: Oh, well, I can't tell you anything except, of course, in my opinion Clair Engle was the better man. It only made sense to me (and naturally I'm very prejudiced) but he had come up--if you're in a labor organization, you call it "coming up through the ranks"--in politics. He had been a district attorney, a state senator, a member of the House of Representatives and now he was running for the Senate. Peter Odegard was a professor. He really had not served in public office before and didn't really have, in my opinion, nearly as much background; didn't know the legislative process in actual fact of practice as Clair did. Alan Cranston, I believe at that time, had not held public elective office. I think that that was the year that he was elected controller.

Fry: That's right.

Engle: He had not held public elective office.

Fry: I guess he came in as the leader of the California Democratic clubs organization earlier in the decade.

Engle: Right.

Fry: Where was Pat Brown in all this and the head of the Democratic party, Roger Kent?

Engle: Pat Brown was then attorney general.

Fry: Yes, and running for governor.

Engle: Not yet. At the time Clair was talking about running--

Fry: Oh, yes, there was a period when Pat Brown was thinking about running for Senator, too.

Engle: Yes, but not really. Well, maybe. I'm not a mindreader; I don't know. But I never knew Clair to consider that a serious thought really on Pat's part. But when he decided to go for the Senate then somebody-- you can't beat something with nothing, if you're playing poker-- somebody had to go for the governorship. Pat was with Ed Pauley at this place out in Hawaii I think, and I remember Clair called out and talked to him, and it was finally decided that Pat would go for the governorship and Clair would go for the Senate.

Fry: I heard that the meeting in Hawaii was for Pauley to convince Pat that he should run for governor. Was that right?

Engle: Who knows? Let me tell you, Amelia, it never fails to absolutely flabbergast me; it's like eyewitnesses to an accident.

Fry: Right, or like the blind man and the elephant. If we can find two blind men who will tell us the same thing, then we're overjoyed and we think maybe it's true. So at least Pat was in Hawaii with Pauley. [laughs]

Engle: Pat was in Hawaii with Pauley, and I was there when Clair called him in Hawaii to talk to him about running for the governorship. I was sitting in the room with my husband at the time he placed the call to Pat. So whatever else went on is beyond my knowledge. This I do know did happen. Other things that happened I'm sure I didn't know about them.

Campaigning Statewide

Fry: In the CDC endorsing convention, did you go to that? I think it might have been at Long Beach that year.

Engle: Oh, probably. As long as Clair was campaigning for the House, we went everywhere together. As a matter of fact, some years I was the office staff. Our office was kind of in a hat because when we were campaigning in the second district, we would just leap from spot to spot and then

Engle: once in a while go back to Red Bluff to pick up clean clothes and sit down for two or three days, and then I would transcribe all the notes and write the letters and so forth, and then we'd start out again.

When he was campaigning for the Senate, of course it had to be a very different thing. It was a different dish of tea entirely, and so very frequently I had my own schedule so I was not always with Clair. I would go to one spot, usually to talk with the ladies at a coffee. I thought there would be a time when I never wanted to see another cup of coffee in my life.

Fry: It was very different, wasn't it? You were always in a room full of ladies in the Senate campaign, whereas when you were campaigning with him for the House of Representatives it was not so exclusively a woman's world.

Engle: Oh no, oh no. Well, you get up in the north country, the women were full and equal partners with the men, and all community affairs were joint affairs. But when you're trying to cover the whole state you do feel you must divide, and there never is enough time.

Fry: And in that division you inevitably drew the women's clubs and things like that?

Engle: It did sort of seem that way. Not that I didn't enjoy it. I used to feel really guilty about asking those poor women to get dressed and come on out when in that year it was unbearably hot in Los Angeles and Long Beach in the middle of October. My word, it was hot! I'd think, "Oh, those poor things. They're not going to want to come out at 10:30 in the morning to have a cup of coffee with some candidate's wife when they could be home by the swimming pool."

It was tough going.

Fry: But they did, didn't they?

Engle: Yes, happily they did.

Fry: What kind of sixth-sense assessment were you able to make of how the campaign was going? Did you feel like it was being successful against Goodie Knight?

Engle: Oh, Amelia, I don't think you ever really--I never felt that I ever got a handle on it, because I was always so afraid to believe what I wanted. It's like you just can't be sure that people aren't telling you what you want to hear rather than what they think.

Fry: Oh, yes, that's a problem, isn't it? Elizabeth Taylor has said that she's not at all sure when she appears for a cause, whether people are coming out because they agree with her about what cause she's doing the benefit for or whether they just come out of curiosity to see her.

Engle: To a certain extent, that you're not sure of. But at least, if the crowds are good and the people are friendly, you have to take that as a plus.

Fry: Of course, now we know that things were really falling into place for the entire Democratic slate of candidates that year.

Engle: It was one of those fluke situations that will probably never happen again.

Fry: One problem that you could have but didn't seem to turn out to be much of a problem was: here was a campaign in which labor issues played a terribly important part because Knowland had decided to run on the right-to-work issue, and this brought out the unions in force and en masse, and, of course, there was a huge labor vote. Well, this doesn't look very good for your husband because, of all the Democratic candidates running, he was the one that was questionable to labor, and he was the one that had this ambiguous endorsement from labor.

Engle: Yet he always got along very well with labor. Because of his background, I think, being raised on a farm and so forth and knowing the production end of something, knowing what it takes to produce--

Fry: The hard work, you mean; the sweat.

Engle: As opposed to manufacturing and so forth.

Fry: That kind of put him outside of the--?

Engle: He could always see both sides.

Fry: Of industrial leader versus machine worker or something like that.

Engle: Right. He could see both sides of this.

Fry: Did you meet any questions about his former stand for Taft-Hartley or anything like that when you were talking to groups?

Engle: No, they had not gotten in that kind of thing yet. We were barely past the period when the wife of a man in politics was seen and not heard.

Fry: You didn't get hard issues?

Engle: Not very frequently; and I always felt that it would be rather cheeky of me, because I never could pretend to read my husband's mind; and I do know that Clair frequently did change his mind if he felt that facts warranted a change. So I never felt I could speak for him, unless he had publicly stated that this was his position on a given [issue].

Fry: And had a definite position paper.

Engle: Unless he had already stated it publicly, I never would have dreamed of saying, "This is the way my husband feels."

Fry: Just for the record, to wrap up on labor, Haggerty had been very close to Goodie Knight when he was governor and Haggerty was head of AFL-CIO in this state, and he and Jack Goldberg and probably some others sent out a letter on the 29th of October, which was getting very close to election day, protesting that Engle had supported Taft-Hartley. Before that, however, the advisory council of labor's endorsing convention had voted seven to five in favor of Engle--

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Fry: And another vote was twelve to eleven for Knight, and then the head of the AFL-CIO said, "All right, the Republicans should vote for Knight and the Democrats should vote for Engle." That was the only thing I saw that might have been a problem. What did you start to say?

Engle: We had some interesting times with labor because you would have in one area, say, the head of the retail clerks would be very friendly and so forth, and then you'd get into another area and the retail clerks would not be friendly at all.

Fry: So it had a lot to do with local unions.

Engle: Of course, I always feel that it does boil down very much when you're dealing with chairmen of organizations or anything: personalities.

Fry: Yes, and those that had a following.

Engle: Well, if the chairman or the president of the organization liked you, you could talk to him. If for some reason or another, suppose they were a particular friend of Goodwin Knight's, well, then you could just feel a chill in the air right now. So it did not necessarily follow that all of the retail clerks went one way or the other; they didn't.

Changes in the Democratic Party

Fry: So what about campaigning with Pat Brown? Was his pretty much a lone-wolf campaign?

Engle: I don't remember how much they campaigned together. I wouldn't have thought they would have done too much together because there was too much ground to cover. You can't have the two top men of the ticket always on the same piece of turf. You've got too much turf to cover.

- Fry: That had kind of been the tradition in the Warren years, for the governor's campaign to be very much of a separate campaign. Of course, California was noted for that because of its nonpartisan--
- Engle: For so long, with cross-filing, it was every fellow for himself and the devil take the hindmost.
- Fry: This was the first really big campaign without cross-filing.
- Engle: So they really weren't that used to going in teams.
- Fry: There was a great team at the top of the CDC and the Democratic party working in the same offices in San Francisco with Roger Kent and Libby Gatov and I guess Bradley was there.
- Engle: Oh, I'm sure Don was.
- Fry: I've often wondered how that functioned from the candidate's viewpoint, because that was a lot of power and money--
- Engle: That's a very good wonder. I've often wondered myself.
- Fry: All right, go ahead and tell me.
- Engle: No, I guess that's the end of that story.
- Fry: Oh, gee! Go ahead and tell me and we can put it under seal, because we need this for other background information.
- Engle: No, I just often question the wisdom of always sharing.
- Fry: Because of the concentration of the campaign funds with others distributing it?
- Engle: Not only because of the concentration, but you never can just always be sure that everybody's interest lies down the same road.
- Fry: For the candidate?
- Engle: Yes.
- Fry: In a way (I'm trying to put myself in your shoes here) I guess it means that potentially you would be competing with other Democratic candidates all the time for the funds and the amount of just plain old man hours of help that you could get from an office like that? Is that right?
- Engle: Yes, and of course don't forget, Amelia, that there was a time when it had been so recent that the candidates really truly had to depend on their own organization because the statewide organization, the central committees, were not that strong.

Fry: Right, this was the first time.

Engle: Yes. There had been years when the central committee chairman used to kind of wear the office like an orchid corsage and not really be so active. Now, I'm sure that was in the years before I ever knew any of them.

Fry: That's what Bob Kenney said when he was in politics in the early forties and became attorney general of the state. He writes in his autobiography that the California Democratic party was just something on paper.

Engle: Yes, I'm sure this is true. This is why, even though actually it was to the disadvantage of an incumbent to have voted to eliminate cross-filing, they did it for the good of the parties because parties were practically emasculated with cross-filing.

Fry: Then when you did have the party structure to work with, you had a lot of cooperative fundraising going on and the distribution of funds that had to come from someone up there whom you hoped looked upon you with favor, right?

Engle: This was true and sometimes you felt that perhaps you had gotten the short end of the stick.

Fry: Did you feel like that in '58? The reason I ask you is that I haven't talked to anyone who didn't look back with great affection and respect for your husband.

Engle: No, I don't think we had any complaints at all actually. Naturally, when one wins one has no complaints.

Fry: But at the time, before you knew you were going to win--

Engle: There were times it was very trying. You always feel that the wolf is going to come in the door before you get out the window when it's coming right down to the wire and, like this labor letter, it's too late to do anything, even if it weren't the money is all committed and there's no more forthcoming. Television even then was such a costly--so costly.

Fry: Yes, if this labor letter that came out on the 29th of October needed to be answered on television on the 31st of October, I'll bet you couldn't possibly raise those funds.

Engle: Even if the time were available. By then it's pretty much of a lead-pipe cinch that the time is going to be pre-empted already. Even if you could find the time, where to get the dollars. This is an old ploy, an old political ploy, to hit them with something when it's too

- Engle: late for any rebuttal. Sometimes it boomerangs, because there are enough people who realize what's been done and who realize that if this had really been a legitimate complaint it would have been brought out long before, and been an issue in the campaign rather than a socko thing at the last minute.
- Fry: This was the campaign where your husband won by a very healthy majority in the primary, and that enabled Kent and others to get a lot of funds from corporations and places like that that ordinarily might not be forthcoming for the general election.
- Engle: Oh, yes. Nothing succeeds like success. If you look like you have at least a good fighting chance.
- Fry: Somewhere here, I think it was a \$600,000 total that was raised because of the big vote in the primary.
- Engle: And doesn't that sound like peanuts today?
- Fry: It does!
- Engle: To us it seemed a great deal.
- Fry: It must have after, as you say, your two-person campaigns up in the mountains.

IV COLLEAGUES AND ISSUES IN WASHINGTON

Friendships in the House of Representatives

Fry: There's one important question that I want to ask you that stretches clear back to '48, who were the main congressmen that he worked with most closely in Washington?

Engle: Oh, merciful goodness! Now, this being 1977, you're asking me to stretch back thirty years.

Fry: I'll tell you who I thought might be.

Engle: Of course, there's the delegation.

Fry: Yes, in the delegation would it be Miller--?

Engle: George Miller.

Fry: From Martinez?

Engle: Who? Oh, no, no. He was much later.* [tape interruption; telephone] Harry Sheppard. Clarence Lea. When Clair came into Congress in '43, Clarence Lea, I believe was dean of the delegation, Clarence Lea of Santa Rosa [first elected in 1916]. In those years the junior members really--it wasn't at all like it is now. In those years the junior members really had a great deal of respect for their elders, let me tell you.

*George P. Miller represented the Seventh Congressional District (Alameda) from 1944-1973. In 1974, George Miller III, whose father had been a leading state senator (1949-1969), was elected to the Eighth Congressional District (Martinez, Contra Costa County).

Fry: Seniority meant a lot more.

Engle: Oh, it meant a great deal more and the new members weren't all that brash. They didn't have an idea that they were going to come in and singlehandedly change things overnight. They were a little more content to take advice. Clair frequently said how kind Clarence Lea had been as the dean in being helpful, telling him, sort of showing him the ropes. Harry Sheppard. Of course, Cecil King. [pause] Who else? Then, of course, there were the men who came in in the Seventy-eighth Congress who were elected in the regular election that year-- Chet Holifield, who just retired.

Fry: Yes, were you close?

Engle: Yes, he was in the Seventy-eighth Congress. He came in just a few months ahead of Clair in the regular election. That year there was John Phillips, Chet Holifield, Norris Poulson, and Clair and it seems to me there was another Californian. Oh yes, Leroy Johnson. But those were people that he was relatively close to. Then a congressman by the name of Alfred Elliott from Tulare, California. He and Clair used to get together occasionally. Alfred was an old cowboy, and they shared an interest in horses and ranching and this sort of thing.

Fry: Do you happen to know who was with him the most on water issues?

Engle: Gosh, I wouldn't without being shown a list. I could pick them out of a list. I can't pick them out of the air. Of course, there were always the Arizona members, because Arizona and California after all were always in competition for the water of the Colorado River. So there was always that competition where your good friend might be of the same party, but if he was from Arizona you could just be sure he was never going to be with you when it came to the vote on the water of the Colorado River.

Of the other members of Congress, there was Teague of Texas who is still in Congress, who was one of Clair's very close friends and a Democrat. Thruston Morton of Kentucky was one of our good friends. He was a Republican. He was in the House, then in the Senate, and for a time was in the Little Cabinet during President Eisenhower's tenure. Omar Burleson of Texas who's still in the House. I don't know, the Texans and the Californians always seemed to get along together well.

Fry: Isn't that interesting? You don't think of them as being a lot alike.

Engle: I think the Western friendliness, the sort of open approach. They had, and they still do have, a House gymnasium group, the members who after hours would go down and play paddle ball and so forth.

- Engle: Speaker Rayburn was chairman of the group, and in those years there were about forty of them. We'd get together, the families, about every other month and take turns entertaining. We'd have them one time and the Teagues would have them another time and so on. So you had a nucleus actually, strangely enough, when it came to voting on a bill. You'd sometimes find the House gymnasium group kind of hanging together on some things.
- Fry: Even though they were different parties and everything!
- Engle: Yes, and from different states. This was long before the formation of that House Democratic Caucus or whatever it was called.
- Fry: Or the study committee.
- Engle: Yes, whatever.
- Fry: It's called different things in different eras, but maybe the nearest thing to it was the gymnasium group. [chuckles]
- Engle: This was a group of men who had a common interest, and they would get together and play ball. They still do have, I think, Republican and Democratic baseball teams, and they compete and raise money to send a child to camp.
- Fry: I can't imagine Rayburn playing baseball.
- Engle: He presided. The Speaker was always chairman of the gymnasium group.
- Fry: Even though he didn't get out and swing a bat.
- Engle: That was his way of sanctioning the group.
- Fry: What about your relations with the powers that be back home? In other words (I'm especially thinking when he was a Senator) decisions that had to be made on issues and bills, when you did have a very strong and active political nucleus, both in the north and the south in California that had offices open year around and were constantly working. I wondered if there were any problems of coordination there on issues and things like that.
- Engle: I can't answer that. I don't know.

Far East Relations; Senate Assignments

- Fry: Then specifically I was very interested in something that looked like a kind of a beginning of the modern era in our relationship with China. Why don't we take a break, and I'll let you read these things. I've just selected some correspondence out of one of the files in the Bancroft on Engle's specific Far East relations.

Engle: He and Warren Magnuson, I think, wasn't it?

Fry: In the correspondence I have that was there, I don't think Magnuson's name is mentioned but he must have had some allies in the Senate or he wouldn't have tried it.

Engle: I think it was Maggie. [pauses to read correspondence*] Where did you get these, from Libby? It must be.

[tape interrupted to read correspondence]

Engle: People who were early on feeling that we must have contact with China without being--it was so difficult for Democrats because they then could be charged with being soft on communism. Let a Democrat say a nice word about the practicality--

Fry: Yes, that it was good for trade.

Engle: Just the practical, for trade, and how you can pretend that all of those millions of people don't exist. You don't have to like their system of government.

Fry: That's what I wanted to ask you about here because Clair made that speech in the Senate which was sent out all over in May of 1959, shortly after he took office as Senator, where he calls for better relations with Pacific basin countries and specifically China. Did he find a problem with the reaction back home, that he was being soft on communism?

Engle: I don't remember specifically, but I would certainly think he might have. I don't think (although I could be wrong), I don't believe that anyone ever accused him of being soft on communism but they easily could have because that was the line if you said we should make some provision, not necessarily at that time recognition of China but at least admit that they exist and that it's foolish not to have any trade or commerce with them at all.

Fry: Did this start with Magnuson?

Engle: I don't remember at all. All I know is that somewhere along the line, Maggie--I wonder if Warren went with Clair? [pause] Warren was chairman of the Commerce Committee.

Fry: This was being handled as a question of commerce primarily?

Engle: As I remember.

Fry: That's what it looks like from the California end of the picture.

Engle: As I remember, that was the whole reason really.

*See Appendix B.

Fry: This committee seemed to be working very much with the commerce community back here, the big shippers and people like that.

Engle: Yes, I'm sure that that was the reason.

Fry: Here, I'll just read this then. In one of the memos, they suggest that Clair have discussion sessions here in California with some of the following "who are well qualified to be of help to him," they say: Brayton Wilbur, president of Wilbur-Ellis, chairman of the board of the Asia Foundation; R.G. Follis, chairman of the board of Standard Oil; T.S. Peterson, president of Standard Oil; Russell G. Smith, vice president of Bank of America in charge of international banking; Andres Soriano, Ansor Corporation, representing major industries in the Philippines. So it was primarily an international--

Engle: Trade-oriented.

Fry: Those aren't people that you would exactly expect to be hot on communism.

Engle: Now, I'm sure that was the--if you can get business people who by and large usually are more conservative in their political thinking, if you can interest them or if you can implement their interest. Lots of times you discover that they've already got the interest. All you have to do is to give it voice.

Fry: Can you string together what happened here after he gave this speech? What came out of it; anything?

Engle: I wouldn't remember without refreshing my memory from files.

Fry: It's awfully interesting for this to have happened in '59. Maybe there will be something in your files.

Engle: There may be, or I could ask Senator Magnuson if he remembers.

Fry: Oh, why don't you do that? I wondered why this came about. It looks here as though it was chosen as something that he could focus on as a Senator, and it may have been because the fields that he was so well-qualified to lead in (which would be water resources, reclamation, and conservation in general, because he had been chairman on a number of committees on those in the House) had pretty well been usurped by the oldtimers in the Senate, so that he didn't have an outlet for those as much in the Senate as he had in the House. He had to create something new.

Engle: Finding yourself on commerce, it's a good committee for a Californian because, goodness knows, if any state is involved in commerce it's our state.

Fry: Because we're isolated really.

Engle: Well, he used to say that we're absolutely in competition with everybody else in the world because of our diversification. We produce everything. We ship, export everything we possibly can that we produce, and why not ship on into the Pacific? Further than that, our port, the Port of San Francisco, is a poor, limping port.

Fry: Yes, it's had problems in keeping up a high enough shipping volume, hasn't it?

Engle: So it's sort of a natural, and you must get your teeth into something. I think Tommy Kuchel probably was on Interior. He may have been the California Senator on Interior.

Fry: Did you read the little line in one of these letters that said, if you're going on your trip you better get started because Kuchel's going on one too! [laughs]

Engle: Tommy Kuchel and Clair were always very good friends. It's sad but true that it's easier, if you're at all compatible, to be close friends when you're of the opposite party. Just think about it. You're not competing for the very self-same attention.

Fry: Yes, or funds, are you?

Engle: Not for the very self-same, earmarked ones, no. Some of it will be overlapping, of course, both in attention and funds. But particularly if you're a junior Senator and your senior Senator is of the same party, you are bound to feel (and sometimes justifiably so) that he's getting all of the cream and you're getting nothing but the skimmed milk when it comes to newspaper coverage, notification from the White House if 1600 Pennsylvania is in the hands of your party, whatever. It's a normal thing to feel like little-sister left-out.

Fry: But if he's competing with Kuchel for coverage--

Engle: Then it's more on an even-steven basis because he's the Democrat, Kuchel was the Republican. As I say, they were good friends.

Fry: As I understood it, there were some problems about coverage back here in California, such as some papers would fail to run a really important press release from Engle. Then you did have the party structure and your nucleus of workers back here, whoever they were, to help carry the ball without any conflict of interest between him and another Senator if the other Senator had been in the same party.

Engle: Right, right. It really is much easier.

Fry: There's always that potential for some time in the not too distant future for both of you to be grabbing for the same spot, as Nixon and Knowland would have done if Knowland hadn't dropped out.

V THE 1964 SENATORIAL CAMPAIGN

The Senator's Fatal Illness; Democratic Leaders' Reactions

Fry: Let's go on and see what we have left on this outline, shall we?

Engle: We're about to run out of time.

Fry: I think we just about coming to the end. In the 1964 campaign which is our final topic, there was the decision to run first reported in December of '63, the formal announcement, and I thought you could fill in who was the main support group for this. The names that I've just gathered that may or may not be right are Mark Boyer--oh, that's the Boyers you were talking about.

Engle: Yes.

Fry: Assemblyman Tom Carrell as head of the campaign.

Engle: Yes.

Fry: That's all I have. Who else?

Engle: I don't remember. I think Mark was financial chairman.

Fry: Yes, that's what I have down here. Your husband had his operation in August--

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Fry: At that time there were reports of his recuperation, so that he was looked upon, I guess, as running this time as an incumbent.

Engle: Oh, yes. The operation was late in August. At that time, of course, I was pretty bitter about the doctors. I suppose in retrospect when you think about it, they probably told me all they felt they knew. You always like to think doctors know more, I guess, than they do. I suppose a great deal is, "We don't know; we'll have to see."

Fry: Brain tumors are hard to spot, aren't they?

Engle: They're very difficult, and they don't always know until they actually do the surgery; and they don't always know then what the results will be, I take it.

Fry: Did the doctor tell you it was malignant?

Engle: It was a very strange thing, Amelia. They hedge in their language a great deal. They will say, "No growth anywhere in the brain can be considered anything but malignant if you really take the word malignant at its true meaning as being something foreign."

Fry: You don't mean the word tumor; you mean the word malignant?

Engle: A malignancy is something that is wrong, it shouldn't be there and so forth. So they said you never can consider any growth in the brain anything but dangerous and bad.

Fry: Do you think they were afraid of--

Engle: Malpractice?

Fry: No, I wonder if they were afraid of the big political impact that this was going to have and they wanted to--

Engle: Oh, I wouldn't think a doctor would ever consider that at all. No, I don't think that had any part in it at all. I think honestly, truly, they just didn't know what to think and, of course, we didn't either. [pause] Brain surgery, I'm still scared to death of it. If I ever had a choice to make for myself, I'd say, "Thank you, but no thank you."

Fry: You would?

Engle: Yes, absolutely. I never would.

Fry: Did he ever have more than one operation?

Engle: Yes.

Fry: Because he went back into the hospital April 23rd.

Engle: The doctor had told me that it was expected, it was anticipated, that his condition would improve after--they said it takes a long time and muscles--depending on exactly what the surgery touches and so forth, some brain tissue may be destroyed and brain tissue does not regenerate itself.

Fry: As a result of the surgery?

Engle: As a result of the surgery. They said, of course, there's always scar tissue. There has to be scar tissue from any incision. But the thought was that if there was a weakness in his right arm and right leg (as there was), that the muscles could be retrained. There was a problem of aphasia. That could be handled with speech training and can you just--I always said what pure hell for a man, an attorney, in politics, a very fluent speaker, to be struck with aphasia. Because aphasia is when you know what you want to say and you can't say it.

Fry: You can't think of the word.

Engle: You can't form it. Just pure hell.

Fry: When he came home from the hospital, how did you help him in this?

Engle: We had speech therapists and a physiotherapist. Strange, he was always better in the evening, late in the evening. I think he was able to relax a little more. He just wasn't trying so hard, and we would be sitting there in the evening, and he could express himself much more freely. The worst time of all was if he felt somebody was calling on him just to see whether he could or could not talk and this sort of thing. No one--you know you're under tension--no one is at their best under tension.

Fry: Some party leaders visited you shortly after. Is that the time you're thinking about especially?

Engle: Yes, the dreadful thing about that was we were so pleased because I thought he was doing so--I was so thrilled that he had recovered as much as he had. The doctors had said, "He should continue making progress for a year and probably whatever plateau you reach at the end of the year, that's probably as good as it's ever going to get."

Well, unhappily that didn't happen. Late in March and April he started slipping back, losing his balance and so forth. That was when they decided the pressure was building again and there should be a second operation. [sighs] What awful hell to have to make a decision like that.

Fry: That whole period must have been the most difficult period in your whole life.

Engle: Oh, my. When I think about it now, I don't know how I lived through it, except that we never know what we can do until we have to and then you discover you can and afterwards you don't know how in the world you did.

Fry: At what point did you know that there wasn't any hope?

Engle: [pause] I don't know. Of course, I come from a long line of people who always feel that as long as there's life, there's hope. You always hope for a miracle and you talk to other people who have known of someone where there was a miraculous recovery.

Fry: When did you know it was cancer really?

Engle: They never did tell me. They never did say the word cancer; never, never did.

Fry: The doctors.

Engle: Never did, no. There was a tumor there and that was it.

Fry: I have a kind of chronology here that you may be able to flesh out. He announced in December for re-election and then party leaders-- who came to visit as the party leaders? Roger Kent?

Engle: Roger Kent, Libbie Smith; I don't remember who all was there. At one time, I know, Pat Brown was there.

Fry: He came with the others?

Engle: They all came and called at the house, and as Clair said later that night, "Well, they have been here to give me a saliva test."

I'll never forget it. That was just exactly what it boiled down to.

Fry: He was very tense during that?

Engle: We were all plenty tense, and let me tell you that was the end of my friendship with that whole group. That was just it.

Fry: What did they tell you? Did they tell you that they thought he should retire from the race?

Engle: Not right then, but I don't know whether it was the next day or what, they got on the phone and they were raising all these questions.

Fry: About his health?

Engle: I really truly felt that he was going to continue to get better and so did he. The doctor had given us every reason to feel that way.

Salinger's Appointment to the Senate

- Engle: Of course, I still feel, Amelia, that if they had stuck with Clair, the Democrats in the state would have come out a little bit better than they did.
- Fry: Yes, they didn't win that election. That was when Murphy got in. If they had stuck with him--
- Engle: Don't forget, Clair was stronger than horseradish. He was the incumbent. If they had stayed with him, when the time came that he had to withdraw, it could have been done very neatly. He could have withdrawn. The governor could have appointed a successor. There would have been no bitterness.
- Fry: Do you think Pierre Salinger would not have run?
- Engle: How do I know? I never pretended to read Pierre's mind. I don't have a clue on that. But he very probably might not have. I would have thought if there just was a solid phalanx and if Pat Brown was wanting to appoint Alan Cranston, there wouldn't have been a challenge.
- Fry: Do you think Cranston could have beat Murphy?
- Engle: Yes. I will never in my life understand how Pierre was able to snatch a defeat out of that. Just unbelievable. The Republicans let George Murphy have the nomination because nobody else really wanted it. They didn't think the nomination was worth a great deal; and how Pierre boggled that I'll never know, except the Democrats were so busy fighting each other that they were practically bloodless when it came to fighting the Republicans. You almost bleed out in a family fight like that.
- Fry: Some of the articles I read after the election said that the way Pierre had been appointed, first of all, the way that he came out as a sort of a Kennedy person, might have turned some people away from him at the last minute like he did. The other thing was that Pat's appointment of him before the general election created some resentment among voters.
- Engle: The only thing the governor could do, for Pete's sake, then.
- Fry: He could have appointed a neutral person if he wanted to be really neutral about it, but that's a Democratic governor who has to appoint a Democratic Senator.
- Engle: But who expects a Democratic governor to be neutral? You don't. You're going to appoint the person you think has the--Pierre was already the Democratic nominee. Clair died in the end of July.

Engle: Pierre had won the primary, so the only thing really truly that was sensible for the Governor to do, he did, and that was to appoint the man who had won the nomination.

Support from Unruh and Mosk; Salinger's Fall Campaign

Fry: In all of this dark episode where all of the sectors of the Democratic party seem to suddenly start to fight when they saw that Engle probably wouldn't run, who really stood by you?

Engle: Very few.

Fry: The ones I picked out were maybe Carmen Warschaw.

Engle: Yes. I wouldn't want to say who else, because how do I know really truly--I wouldn't want to be unfair to anyone.

Fry: Well, I have a newspaper article here where she seemed to--

Engle: I could, and will not, name the ones I felt were rats leaving what they considered a sinking ship.

Fry: Oh, we know who wanted him to retire.

Engle: If only Pat Brown hadn't been so anxious to be a kingmaker. He kept saying, "Then I can get in my man."

That hurt the most because Clair had always considered Pat one of his very, not just a political friend, but a close, personal friend. When Clair went to the hospital, there was one person he said you must call and tell. When he went in we didn't know that there was going to have to be surgery or what. He went in for a series of tests. As soon as the doctor said, "It must be brain surgery," I had two other opinions. A man came down from Johns Hopkins, and one came from New York. As soon as their decision was made he said, "You must call Pat Brown because it isn't fair to him for him not to know. After all, he is the titular head of the party in California. It isn't fair of him not to know."

Clair was thinking of Pat when he was faced with this, and then for Pat to turn around and act the way he did--

Fry: In the meantime Pat was having some other problems, because Mosk wanted to run for Senate and then he turned out to have some vulnerabilities that nobody--

Engle: Well, Mosk and--who was the house leader for so long? Jess Unruh. [pause] Jess I think was with us, at least he was very kind. He was always very kind to me.

Fry: Yes, there was a Princeton study made of this election in California after it was all over, and one of them said in this study, "A number of assemblymen that were identified with Unruh"--he was more or less at that time organizing the assembly's campaigns in the south because he was able to collect the funds for them--

Engle: Yes, Jess was very strong then.

Fry: Those assemblymen were encouraged to stay with Engle while Unruh remained neutral. I guess he felt he had to remain neutral, but he was encouraging his assemblymen to really gather around and support him.

Engle: He may have remained neutral publicly but I don't feel that Jess was neutral personally because he was in touch with me, as was Stanley Mosk, but on a different basis.

Fry: How was Mosk in touch with you?

Engle: We talked on the phone, and I'm not going into that.

Fry: With the Unruh question, he was frequently in Washington at this time because of his contacts with the White House.

Engle: Yes, Jess came back. I saw him a couple of times. As a matter of fact, I did a television spot. Jess was interested in Pierre's candidacy.

Fry: After Pierre announced or before?

Engle: After Clair had made an announcement that he was withdrawing, Jess got in touch with me and he came back and he was--I think Pierre--well, I don't know. I don't know the timing on that. I think Pierre had already announced. Well, I know he had when Jess came back. I don't know when Jess got interested. Only Jess and Pierre know that.

Fry: You cut the television commercial. This was the one that was used in the latter week of the campaign.

Engle: This was for the primary.

Fry: Yes, that was the one I wanted to ask you about.

Engle: I never knew how it turned out.

Fry: What was it? Can you describe it? Was it you and Unruh or just you?

Engle: No, I think we just went down to a little studio, and I think I simply made a statement in support of Pierre.

Fry: Then you campaigned and Clair's brother campaigned for Pierre? Is that right?

Engle: I didn't campaign for Pierre.

Fry: You didn't?

Engle: No. You're forgetting, Clair died at the end of July. August I was closing the offices. About mid-September I came out and spent some time with my family and with his family in Red Bluff. I had some things I had to tidy up there, and I wanted to see his mother and father who were living then. I went back to--

Helping Out in Washington and the South

Fry: Then you didn't campaign or make any speeches?

Engle: Not in California. I don't remember making any public appearances. Then I went back to Washington, and some time in October Lady Bird Johnson called me. She was very sweet. We had been good friends and, as a matter of fact, when I went to take a plane to come out for Clair's funeral she came with the White House car to pick me up and take me to the airport. Anyway, at the time she called in October, she was campaigning; and I did some volunteer typing to help out with the campaign correspondence, because she had said to me, "You're better off keeping busy and preferably not just right at home." So I went down to the Democratic campaign headquarters.

Fry: In Washington?

Engle: Yes. There was a women's speakers bureau set up and so forth. I went down there and did work out of there. I made a couple of trips into the southern part of the United States with Lee Udall. Lee Udall and I went on behalf of the Democratic ticket. That was late in October. We went into Florida and Georgia, because I remember being in Atlanta. We went into four states. I wonder what the other ones were.

Fry: I bet that was fun to campaign because it was a strong ticket. Did you find that true or was the South particularly difficult?

Engle: No, the South was a little iffy then. The South was a little iffy. They were then starting to be a two-party South and so it was--

- Fry: Yes, and they were beginning to have sort of dual parties in some states with very strong black political groups coming out.
- Engle: Yes, but you always had the ultraconservative, as well as what I would call moderate Democrat, and then you were beginning to have a noticeable Republican party in the South. So it was interesting, and it kept my mind off of my own problems.
- Fry: But you and Clair Engle's brother never did campaign together here for--
- Engle: I suppose Fred, his brother, did. It I made any appearances for Pierre (and I'm sure that if I had been here at the time and he asked me to, I would have), if I did, I don't remember. But there are portions of that time in my life that I've almost blanked out, I think deliberately.

Pressures on Senator Engle to Resign

- Fry: Let me pick up a couple of things here. Salinger flew out and registered on March 19. That was after the CDC convention which was February 21 and 22, and there was a tape or a record played of Clair Engle there. Is that right?
- Engle: I think we had a telephone hooked up. I think it was a telephone hook-up from the office, if I remember correctly.
- Fry: [looking through papers] I've got a sheet here that looks like sort of a transcript of the public telephone hook-up and I thought you could tell me what it was.* At the end, Engle had trouble with the words, right?
- Engle: Probably so. [looks at papers] Where did you get this?
- Fry: It was in one of the groups of papers that's been deposited of this whole campaign, and I thought it was probably referring to that phone call. I don't know under what circumstances that was typed up or anything. Have you ever seen it before?
- Engle: No, I've never seen this before.
- Fry: Things like that might bring back some bitter memories to you that might be kind of hard to take right now. At any rate, that was kind of the turning point as far as actually registering the Democratic opinion about who should run in the race, because at that point Cranston got the nomination over Engle.

*See supporting documents in The Bancroft Library.

Engle: Yes, after having said that as long as Clair was in the race he would never be a candidate. Now, do not ask me what my relationship is with the Senator because I just don't see him.

Fry: That is also I suppose the reason why you didn't go on and campaign for Cranston; but you were pro-Salinger?

Engle: Yes. Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

Fry: Let me try out a couple of theories on you that I have read, because I think it's always interesting to see what it really was like when you were right there as opposed to the armchair theoreticians. One was that there was hope that Senator Engle could stay in office on through the election and win it so that when it was necessary to appoint someone to fill his seat, this could have been made by the governor with the legislature acting on it. Unruh at that time was pretty much in control of the legislature and had a lot of power there, so this would be more likely to be an appointment that Unruh could have more influence on than Cranston.

Engle: Well, I can't comment on that. Probably so.

Fry: There is another question that I wanted to ask in relation to that. Do you remember Unruh having anybody else in mind, maybe not Pierre but someone else, before Pierre entered the race? Did Unruh have a man in mind?

Engle: How do I know? You must remember that this was a time in my life when I really truly--I didn't know what was going on in the world. My world was right there with my sick husband. I don't know what other people were up to. All I knew was what they were up to as far as it had any bearing on our lives.

Fry: My last question is, without calling any names, what form did the efforts take to get Clair Engle to resign early? There are stories in the Chronicle about various types of efforts. One would be offering him a job in government or you a job in government to ease him out of the Senate.

Engle: I found it absolutely unbelievable. There was frequent pressing, and I felt it was insulting. I had absolutely no interest in any of them because--

Fry: Do you mean the offers?

Engle: Yes. I just--well, man's inhumanity to man, particularly--I'm sorry. [Leaves room briefly to compose herself. Tape off.] He was improving.

Fry: This happened when he was still gaining in his aphasia?

Engle: He was still getting better, yes. After they were doing all this he went to the office; he used to go to the office every day. They could not wait. It seemed indecent haste to me. So very greedy for the power in their own hands when at least Clair and I had both felt that he was still physically able, and would become more able, to fulfill the job himself. They grabbed for the reins before he had ever let loose and I felt, as much as he had done for the party (he had always worked with them; he certainly had been a help to the governor), how dare they treat him that way!

##

Note: I suppose I should not let all of the last statement remain, but I will. Even now the horror of that time and a good deal of anger returns as I read this.

L.E. [November 1980]

Transcriber: Michelle Stafford
Final Typist: Matthew Schneider

TAPE GUIDE -- Lucretia Engle

Date of Interview: 6 October 1977

tape 1, side A

tape 1, side B

tape 2, side A

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BIOGRAPHY OF CLAIR ENGLE

U. S. Senator from California

(Democrat)

FAMILY

Born on September 21, 1911, in Bakersfield, California. Parents -- Mr. and Mrs. Fred J. Engle, Sr., of Red Bluff, California. Two brothers -- Fred J. Engle, Jr., and Robert E. Engle, both of California. Married Lucretia Caldwell of San Jose, California. One daughter, Yvonne Engle Childs.

EDUCATION; PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Red Bluff High School; Chico State College (California); Hastings College of Law, University of California, LL.B., 1933.

Practiced law in Tehama County, California, from 1933 to 1943.

Appointed in 1942 to temporary service as Special Deputy Attorney General of California under Earl Warren, then Attorney General.

POLITICAL CAREER

1934 -- elected District Attorney of Tehama County, California. Reelected in 1938.

1942 -- elected to the California State Senate.

1943 -- (August) elected to the U. S. House of Representatives in the 78th Congress at a special election to fill seat left vacant on the death of Representative Englebright.

Reelected to the House seven successive terms -- having won, under California's former cross-filing system, the nomination of both major parties in 1946 and all subsequent elections to the House. Assistant Democratic Whip in the House from the 80th Congress through the 84th Congress. Committee assignments in the House included the following: Member, Veterans Affairs Committee; Chairman, Committee on War Claims; Chairman, Public Lands Subcommittee; Chairman, Irrigation and Reclamation Subcommittee; Chairman, Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

1958 -- elected to the United States Senate.

Committee Assignments,
U. S. Senate, 86th Congress

Democratic Legislative Review Committee (Chairman)

Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee -- and its

Aviation Subcommittee
Merchant Marine & Fisheries Subcommittee
Asia Subcommittee
Canada and Iceland Subcommittee

Armed Services Committee -- and its

Military Construction Subcommittee

Select Committee on Small Business -- and its

Monopoly Subcommittee
Financing Subcommittee

Select Committee on National Water Resources

Highlights of Legislative Efforts

Recognized in the House of Representatives as spokesman for the West in the field of conservation and utilization of water resources, including reclamation, flood control, electric power, and rivers and harbors development. Author of every important bill in the House expanding California's great Central Valley Project since its initial authorization in 1937, including the Trinity River Project, American River Development (Folsom), and Sacramento Valley Canals.

Largely responsible for Federal research activities in the field of salt water conversion, having authored the Saline Water Act of 1952 and amendment thereto in 1955. These laws authorized \$10 million for research in this field.

Author and responsible for enactment of two measures considered to be the most important supplements to general reclamation law since the Reclamation Projects Act of 1939. One measure established the Small Reclamation Projects program authorizing interest-free loans up to \$5 million for irrigation districts and other water users organizations to rehabilitate and extend their works or build new projects; the other measure set up a Distribution Systems program authorizing interest-free loans to irrigation districts receiving water from Federal reclamation projects to construct their own water distribution systems.

Champion of the domestic mining industry. Strong advocate and supporter of programs for the stockpiling of

Biography of Senator Clair Engle

Page 3.

strategic and critical minerals and metals for defense purposes and as a safeguard for the economy of the nation. Has long sought to obtain a national minerals policy and program which would recognize that the development and maintenance of going domestic mining and mineral industries are essential to the future security and economy of the country. In the 84th Congress, authored and steered to successful conclusion the Mining Claims Restoration Act of 1955, which opened to mineral entry approximately 7 million acres of public lands withdrawn or reserved for power development; and co-authored the Multiple-Use Mining Law which provided for the elimination of invalid and stagnant mining claims and permitted the multiple use of larger areas of the public domain.

Co-author of Alaska and Hawaii statehood bills. As Chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, played a major role in obtaining passage of Alaska statehood bill in the 85th Congress. In the 82nd Congress, as chairman of House conferees, had a significant part in securing enactment of the bill that gave Commonwealth status to Puerto Rico.

Also during tenure as Chairman of House Interior Committee, launched and directed a searching investigation of military land excesses and abuses of conservation laws on military areas; wrote and led the fight for the corrective law known as the Engle Military Land Withdrawal Act, in the 85th Congress.

PUBLISHED WORKS

Author of two-volume publication entitled, "Central Valley Project Documents" (1956, 1957) -- a comprehensive work which put together the complete background and legislative history of the Central Valley Project in California, and all the significant documents relating to the construction, operation and management of this monumental water resource development.

MILITARY RECORD

1948 to date	U. S. Air Force Reserve (Colonel). Active duty assignment in Korea in 1952.
1942-1943	County Director, Aircraft Warning Service, 4th Fighter Command, U.S. Army Air Forces (Tehama County, California).
1929-1932	Member, California National Guard (184th Infantry).
1924-1926	Citizens Military Training Camp, Ft. Winfield Scott, San Francisco (Coast Artillery).

Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

...

OTHER PERTINENT DATA

Cited in 1959 as "Man of the Year" by the Board of Governors of Hastings College of Law, University of California.

Named in 1955 as one of the outstanding members of the California Delegation to Congress by the Council of the California Congressional Recognition Plan.

Currently a member of the Board of Visitors of the Naval Academy and the Board of Visitors of the Merchant Marine Academy.

Licensed pilot. As a Member of the House of Representatives for 15 years, flew own plane to keep abreast of the affairs of the far-flung 2nd Congressional District of California.

Church affiliation: Methodist.

Fraternal Organizations: Member of Masons, Elks, and Rotary Club (honorary); past member of Lions, Kiwanis, and Redmen.

Student of Shakespeare. Special interests include hunting and fishing.

Residence: Red Bluff, California.

July 1959.

RICHARD B. RUSSELL, GA., CHAIRMAN

HARRY FLOOD BYRD, VA.
LYNDON B. JOHNSON, TEX.
JOHN STENNIS, MISS.
STUART SYMINGTON, MO.
HENRY M. JACKSON, WASH.
SAM J. ERVIN, JR., N.C.
STROM THURMOND, S.C.
CLAIR ENGLE, CALIF.
E. L. BARTLETT, ALASKA
HOWARD W. CANNON, NEV.

LEVERETT SALTONSTALL, MASS.
STYLES BRIDGES, N.J.
MARGARET CHASE SMITH, MAINE
FRANCIS CASE, S. DAK.
PRESCOTT BUSH, CONN.
J. GLENN BEALL, MD.

APPENDIX B - Correspondence concerning Senator Engle's
47 interest in the Pacific Basin

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

HARRY L. WINGATE, JR., CHIEF CLERK

April 2, 1959

Mrs. Elizabeth R. Smith
Democratic National Committeewoman
Democratic Headquarters
212 Sutter Street
San Francisco 8, California

Dear Libby:

Thank you for your letter of March 31 about my decision to devote special attention to the Far East. You have received the correct information from Roger; I am getting ready to initiate a major program of study of what I call the Pacific Lake.

First I am planning a speech in the Senate, in which I outline the most critical problems of those areas, and the questions which must be faced up to. From time to time I will try to make constructive suggestions respecting the solution of specific problems.

If you could line me up a few people in San Francisco who have knowledge of the Far East, I would like from time to time to submit memoranda to them, and perhaps have them originate material for me. I am also planning to make possibly a six-weeks trip to the Far East this fall, visiting Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and I hope Southeast Asia, and perhaps India.

The next time I'm out there maybe I could talk with the people at the Asia Foundation.

I really appreciate your interest and willingness to help me on this.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

CLAIR ENGLE
U. S. Senator

April 20, 1959

Dear Clair,

Thank you so much for your informative reply to my inquiry about you taking a special interest in the Pacific community.

I'm delighted at the news, and so were the others to whom I reported it. In fact, we were all so pleased that we decided to let no time go by in getting together to see in what way we might be of some help.

As a result, you now have an informal but deeply interested committee for this purpose, composed of Jack Abbott, Al Gatov, Ellie Heller, Joe Houghteling, Helen Milbank, Jim Thacher and myself. All but Ellie met at my house for dinner the other night means by which we might be of some assistance. What we came up with is in the attached memo.

As you probably know, Helen is going to Washington very soon and will call you office for an appointment. Bob Blum, head of the Asia Foundation here, will also be in Washington soon, I believe around the middle of May. He too, would like to talk with you.

We were of one mind that California and the whole nation is very fortunate in having a man of your capacities and energy to whom it can look, as time goes on, for information and leadership on matters pertaining to the complexities of our many relationships with Pacific countries.

We want to serve you in any way we can, and would appreciate your reaction to our initial ideas.

With warm good wishes always,

Sincerely,

*From Elizabeth Smith
to Senator Eagle*

Memo to Senator Engle

From: Jack Abbott, Al Gatov, Helen Milbank, Ellie Heller, Joe Houghteling, Jim Thacher, Libby Smith.

1. It was earnestly hoped that it will be possible for you to make the projected trip to the Far East under the sponsorship of your Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, feeling it would give you much more scope and permit you to see anybody you wish, especially political and industrial leaders, in the countries visited.
2. Because of the variety of existing problems in our contacts with those countries, it was suggested you might get more out of the trip if you focused on one phase, namely foreign trade and our aid programs.
 - A. Because Pacific trade is so important to California, it was felt that California-Pacific economic questions should receive the main emphasis.
3. It was suggested you might like to have discussion sessions here with some of the following, all well qualified to be of help to you in this particular field.

Brayton Wilbur, Pres. Wilbur-Ellis, Chairman, Board of Asia Foundation.

R.G.Follis, Ch. Board of Standard Oil of Calif.

T.S.Peterson, President, Standard Oil.

Russell G. Smith, vice president, Bank of America, in charge of international banking.

Andres Soriano, Ansor Corporation, representing many major industries in the Philippines.

4. It was suggested you might wish to defer your first speech on your interest in the Far East until you have been back here and met with some of these people. We feel they will be eager to cooperate with you, would welcome your interest, and would continue to give you help and information— especially if they are consulted in advance of your public identification with the subject.

May 18, 1959

Memo to: Members of Engle-Pacific Committee -
 Ellis, Jack Abbott, Al Cator, Jim Thatcher, Joe Houghtaling,
 Helen Milbank

- 1) In case you missed it, last Friday's S.F. News had the following in Ruth Finney's column:

"An attempt to find ways of increasing sales of U.S. products in Asia will be made by a new Asia subcommittee of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce committee on which Senator Engle is a ranking member.

"In Asia, the Sino-Soviet bloc has done much in the way of trade inroads to weaken the strength of the free world," says Engle. "Since trade is just another weapon of political warfare to the Communists, we must gain further understanding of what steps the U.S. and the free world must take to remain economically healthy."

- 2) Mr. Blum, Executive Director of the Asia Foundation, talked with Clair last Thursday and went over the speech Clair plans to deliver on the Senate floor, probably this week. He reported that Clair asked for comments and changes and, that when he offered some, they seemed well received. He says the speech fell into two parts, the first and longest dwelt on historical background, the second was a list of recommendations of what opportunities might be available to us. He thought it a good speech and said Clair had already had help with it from Fulbright, Mansfield and Humphrey and was going to consult Chester Bowles also. Blum also added that he liked the Senator very much, was impressed with his keenness and energy, and would cooperate in any way he could in the future.
- 3) Clair told me over the phone that he will be in Los Angeles, not S.F., over the Memorial Day weekend, but that as soon as the session is over he will come to S.F. and make it his base of operation. He is still planning to make his trip to the Far East.
- 4) I will write Tom Bendorf today for a copy of the speech and send it to you on receipt.

Libby Smith

June 5, 1959

Senator Clair Engle,
Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Clair,

Yesterday Ellie Heller, Jack Abbott, Al Gatov and I met to put together a list, or the start of one, to which copies of your speech should be sent.

In addition to the World Affairs Council, Etc., which you mentioned, we felt that if it is not too much trouble to your staff, a personal letter from you, on personal (white) stationery, to the individuals on the attached list, would definitely be political money-in-the-bank for you now and in the future. You will see by their titles, why they seemed worthwhile. We even took the liberty of composing a general draft of the covering letter. As you may guess, Al Gatov was responsible for the major portion of the list. He feels, and we concurred, that big as these people may be, they don't often get a personal letter from a member of the Senate, they will be flattered and even may read the speech. We hoped the letter would be on your Interstate and Foreign Commerce letterhead, and that the speech would be in the form of a reprint, rather than a mimeographed copy.

After the luncheon, Al called Stuart Ward of the Commonwealth Club, to see if we could sew up for you a fall date (left open), for you to address the club after you return from your Far East trip. We thought you could probably use a great deal of the original speech, with substantiating personal observations. Ward will report back to Al on the 10th, after he clears it with his program committee. We rushed into this, feeling you could always decline, or we on your behalf, if it didn't meet with your approval, because we heard the horrid news that your Republican colleague, Kuchel, is also going out there. We don't mind him getting into the act, as long as it is clearly understood that it is your act.

Hope all went well in Los Angeles. I haven't seen Don since he got back.

With warm good wishes and great pride, and please excuse the typing errors,

Affectionately,

June 17, 1959

Memo to the China Cabinet. Ellie, Helen, Jim, Al, Jack and Joe.

The enclosed editorial about his China Policy speech pleased Clair very much indeed, as did Joe's in the Sunnyvale Standard, and the one in the Chronicle.

He is also happy that the Commonwealth Club has invited him to address the membership on some open date in the fall after he gets back from his trip to the Far East.

I understand that Senator Byrd took him on, in a speech almost as long as his, on a point by point basis, without mentioning his name. He has not expressed himself to me on this.

Clair will have 3000 reprints of the speech within a few days. We have sent him a list of 75 names, suggesting he send them the speech with a personal covering letter, which he will do. Most of that list are names of people engaged in foreign trade, shipping, international banking, and the chairmen and executive directors of a number of commissions, associations and Chambers of Commerce. With that many to distribute, I think he would appreciate getting additional names from any of you who might like to send them to him.

"I'm very grateful to all of you who've been good enough to take an interest in my entry into the complex field of our China Policy", was in a letter I received today. I guess we're batting 1000 so far.

Libby

July 17, 1959

Mr. Jack Holwerda
Spring Canyon Coal Co.
620 Market Street
San Francisco, California

Dear Mr. Holwerda:

Your name has been suggested to us as one who, because of your profession, would have a special interest in the enclosed copy of Senator Clair Engle's China Policy speech.

This maiden speech of the newly elected Senator from California was delivered in the Senate of the United States on May 21st and has attracted nationwide interest and acclaim.

I hope you will enjoy reading it.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH R. SMITH
Democratic National Committee-
woman from California

ERS:cmc

PLEASE SEND COPIES OF THE ENGLE FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH TO

The following professors, all at Stanford University Law School
Stanford, California:

Professor Lawrence Ebb
Professor Keith Mann
Professor Phil Neal
- Professor Herbert Packer
Stanford Law Library

The following professors at ~~S.F.~~ State College:

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Occidental College
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Col. A.D. Fisk
Far Eastern Department
University of Washington
Seattle 5 Washington

Philip S. Spoerry
Political Science Department
Washington State College
Pullman, Washington

Rev. Harry Scholefield
Unitarian Church
Franklin at Geary
San Francisco

Also:

Mr. Jack Holwerda
Spring Canyon Coal Co.
620 Market Street
San Francisco

Admiral Hume
Berkeley

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

October 30, 1963

Dear Libby:

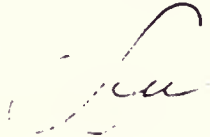
Clair and I both enjoyed your chatty letter of the 18th. From my point of view, all Pat has to do is to keep his tongue (which has an unfortunate way of getting away from him) under control. If he would remember to concentrate on his own state administration, I am sure Clair will be able to take care of his own federal job in good order.

We celebrated last weekend because the doctor let Clair go home for Saturday and Sunday. It was somewhat of a strain, both physically and emotionally, but he did get along so well he is coming home again this weekend and, the Lord willing, the doctor expects to be able to discharge him completely soon.

We were both happy to learn that Shelley's campaign has picked up steam. We thought he was strong enough in San Francisco to get by without too much trouble but I guess that, when any one gets to thinking that, then he is in for an unpleasant surprise.

Keep in touch with us and one of these days, before too long, you will get a letter dictated and signed by the Senator "hissself".

Our love to you and Al.



Mrs. Albert W. Gatov
21 Rancheria Road
Kentfield, California

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Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Governmental History Documentation Project
Goodwin Knight/Edmund Brown, Sr., Era

Pierre Salinger

A JOURNALIST AS DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGNER AND U.S. SENATOR

An Interview Conducted by
Amelia R. Fry
in 1979

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INTERVIEW HISTORY -- Pierre Salinger

Time of Sessions: The afternoon of May 14, and early morning (8:30) of May 15, 1979

Place of Session: The first session-- Mr. Salinger's office in the ABC-TV complex, 22 avenue d'Eylau, Paris
The second session--Mr. Salinger's apartment at 248 rue de Rivoli.

Those present: Mr. Salinger, with (1) secretary and (2) maid in and out occasionally

The Interview:

A major question in the Goodwin Knight/"Pat" Brown Era in California is how Pierre Salinger's 1964 campaign for U.S. Senator fits into the denouement of the Democrats' domination of state politics. This interview explores that campaign and also discusses subjects not targeted in Salinger's oral history of his White House years, recorded for the John F. Kennedy oral history project. Such supplemental topics include Salinger's schooling and newspaper work in California and also campaigns that occurred after 1964.

The interviewer, who was to be in Geneva and London on another research project in 1979, wrote Mr. Salinger on April 23 proposing an interview in Paris. Via friends in that city, a date was scheduled to fit the interviewer's rather rigid travel plans and Salinger's own fast-paced pressure in covering news for the Paris Bureau of ABC television. The timing of the two sessions was incredibly fortunate. The interviewer was due in London the following day, and Salinger had to go to Cannes "to view one film in particular." It was obvious that his life was extremely interesting and complex: a rich social life both in Paris and at the chateau in the country; his book on his Kennedy years had appeared (in French) and he was busily preparing a version for publication in the United States by Doubleday and Company. Nonetheless, when the interview was not quite completed the first day, he made arrangements to tape an additional short session the next morning.

His cooperation was consistent. He shut out the bustle of the news office, including as many telephone calls as possible. Only three or four came in during that first session--one from "Jerry" at the White House. The interview flowed easily. As a master interviewer himself, he easily swung through the pages of a 1964 campaign chronology and the proposed interview outline. A familiar image on television screens in the early '60s was his round, cherubic face at the White House telling reporters only what he wanted them to know. In Paris the countenance was still boyish and still round, but there was no sparring. In shirtsleeves he sat behind the smoke of a continuous

cigar with his feet on the desk, seemingly at home in the roomy office with the typical clutter of a news operation. Through the windows behind him loomed the shadow of the Eiffel Tower; the perpetual-motion noise of the traffic and the inevitable sirens of Paris streets came through as authentic sound effects.

The second session, held at 8:30 a.m. in the Salingers' beautiful apartment overlooking the Tuileries, the Place de Concorde, and the Louvre's gallery of impressionist art, was much quieter. The maid answered the door and Salinger materialized immediately looking fresh with all motors running. As the interview was getting underway, the family dog, Marmalade, came in for introductions, and the maid brought coffee with hot milk. A hitch developed when the tape recorder inexplicably refused to accept power--plug-in or batteries, even though the latter were new; but Salinger immediately saved the day with an ABC recorder, which he loaded with the interviewer's cassette, then ran the machine, turning the tapes and even offering to hold his own very directional microphone. Again, the discussion topics were duly dispatched one by one, and the interview was concluded before his day officially began at ABC-TV.

The transcript was sent to Mr. Salinger for his review March 18, 1980, with a few questions about ambiguities and names. He reviewed it, made very few changes, and returned it in September of 1981.

We had left the apartment together at the end of the second session. On the way down in the elevator, he explained that although he has large quantities of papers in their house in the country, there would be difficulties in depositing his senatorial papers in California because the rest of his collection was already at the John F. Kennedy Library. It was agreed that to separate his papers with one part on each coast would complicate the efforts of archivists, future scholars, and also for him. At this writing the plan is to exchange oral histories with the Kennedy Library, since there should be minimal duplication of the subject matter covered in each interview. Other interviews bearing on the 1964 campaign in California are a part of the Knight-Brown Government Eras Documentation Project at The Bancroft Library. The papers of Senator Clair Engle are deposited in the Tehama County Library at Red Bluff, California.

Amelia R. Fry
Interviewer-Editor

8 February 1982
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California Berkeley

I PERSONAL BACKGROUND

[Interview 1: May 14, 1979]##

Parents and Grandparents

Fry: Can you tell us a little about your childhood and your schooling in San Francisco? We'd like also to get just a brief statement of who your parents were and who your grandparents were because The Bancroft Library wants to get as much genealogy of California people as possible.

Salinger: I was born in San Francisco on the 14th of June, 1925. My mother, whose maiden name was Jehanne Bietry, was a native of France, born in a small town in the east of France called Fliche a l'Eglise, and had come to San Francisco in 1922 where she met my father, whose name was Herbert Salinger and who was a mining engineer.

He met my mother and they were married in San Francisco in 1923. I was the first son of that marriage. My mother's father was an old-time French political and union leader who had served as a member of the French parliament from 1906 to 1910. His name was Pierre Bietry. My grandmother's name was Anna Bietry and at the time of my birth she lived still in France. My grandfather died in 1918 in Saigon, Indochina.

I'll give you first my mother's side because when my grandfather died in 1918 in Indochina, he had founded a newspaper in Saigon and my mother went to Indochina at the end of 1918 to take over the newspaper. She was then, I think, around twenty years old. She lived in Indochina from 1918 to late 1922, when she was selected as one of the delegates of Indochina, which was then a French possession, to a conference of

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 67.

Salinger: Pacific nations which was being held in Honolulu. She went to Honolulu to participate in that meeting and when she got to Honolulu decided that she'd take a swing over to San Francisco to see what the mainland of the United States looked like, and that's where she met my father.

Fry: On that small decision rested your fate. [chuckling]

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: And so she never did go back to Indochina?

Salinger: She never went back to Indochina, although she did maintain links with Indochina during the Second World War. She was in charge of American propaganda in Indochina in the San Francisco office of the Office of War Information.

She wrote propaganda broadcasts that were broadcast into French Indochina during World War II and, of course, she had substantial knowledge about Indochina, having lived there during part of her young years.

My father's family had come to the United States in the early part of the 19th century. They were German Jews who abandoned Germany at a time of anti-Semitic campaigns in Germany. My grandfather on my father's side, Emil Salinger, was already dead when I was born, but my father's mother still lived and lived in New York. Her name was Hanna. As a matter of fact, I got to know her quite well as a boy.

In fact, I also got to know my maternal grandmother because when I was six months old, my mother went to France with me to pick up her mother and bring her back to California. My mother then came back to California in the end of 1925, early 1926, and then lived the rest of her life in California and died in California. Never went back to France.

And my mother never went back to France after that trip in 1925--the end of '25, early '26--until 1965, when I got married in France. She came to France for my wedding, which was the first time she'd been to France for almost forty years.

Fry: I knew you had married in France, but I thought maybe you had lived a dual sort of life with your mother also being from France, and you'd gone back and forth a lot with her.

Salinger: No. No.

Fry: But that's wrong!

Salinger: Actually, after that first trip, obviously of which I have no memory, when I was six months old, the first time I went to France was in 1961 when I was working at the White House and I went to Paris to prepare John Kennedy's trip to France. So there was also a gap of almost thirty-five years between the time I was there the first time and the time when I was there the second time.

Fry: What languages did you speak in the home?

Salinger: We spoke French and English. Actually I learned French before I spoke English. I have to explain that a little bit because when I was very young, about four years old, maybe five, my family picked up stakes from San Francisco and moved to Canada. We moved to Toronto, Canada. It was the start of the Depression and my father, a mining engineer, was having trouble finding work in San Francisco and was offered a job in Cobalt, Ontario. So we moved to Toronto where he could commute to Cobalt and work.

Schooling and Musical Education

Salinger: I, at that time, was entered into, because I showed some signs of being a piano prodigy, the Toronto Conservatory of Music and did not go to school for a while.

All my schooling was done by a tutor who taught me in French at home. Let's say that when I got to be seven or eight years old I had a better command of the French language than I did of the English language.

Then my family went back to San Francisco in about 1935, when I was about ten. That's when I started in the education system in the United States. I spent one year in a public school, the Madison School, which is across the street from my home on Sacramento Street, and then did the rest of my grammar school at a kind of an advanced school called the Presidio Open Air School.

Fry: Oh, yes. That's a very interesting school and a very interesting part of San Francisco's culture, actually.

Salinger: Yes. There were only four of us in our class, one of them being Art Hoppe.

Fry: Oh, really! It's produced some awfully interesting people. So you and Hoppe were there together.

Salinger: Right.

Fry: How did you like it?

Salinger: I loved it. It was not at all a rigid school. They let people develop their different interests. The classes were very small and it was very enjoyable.

I then went to Lowell High School from the Presidio Open Air School.

Fry: To start high school?

Salinger: I went at the start of high school to Lowell.

Fry: How did you find that that compared to the academic level that you had had at Presidio Open Air? Did they push you at Presidio?

Salinger: They didn't push us but it was such a wide open type of education that I felt when I came to Lowell I was quite a bit ahead of the other students, even though I was only--I'm trying to think now--I was only eleven when I went to high school.

Fry: Just a little ahead of your age group.

Salinger: Actually, I graduated from Lowell when I was fifteen.

Fry: Why didn't you stay at Madison?

Salinger: Well, I had this kind of a loose education in Canada and I didn't fit into the kind of formal schooling system at Madison, and the family just thought I was better off to have something more relaxed and so they sent me to POAS.

Fry: There was a lot of regimentation, then, all of a sudden for you.

Salinger: Yes. And I just was not used to that. Although I had to get used to some form of regimentation when I went to Lowell, although Lowell, of all the high schools in San Francisco, was also the most relaxed. It was supposed to be at that time the most advanced from the standpoint of educational opportunity, and there were a lot of bright kids around. An eleven-year-old who suddenly found himself in high school with kids who were twelve and thirteen, was not totally drowned in that atmosphere, where he might have been in another high school in San Francisco.

Fry: Outside, were you keeping up with your piano lessons?

Salinger: What happened with my piano was that I stayed at piano as long as

Salinger: I was in Toronto, came back to San Francisco, and gradually my family, because I was practicing three and four hours a day, began to think that I should move away from it for a while.

There was a considerable interest in music in my family. My mother was art and music editor for the Examiner and my uncle was an accomplished cellist. My father had broken off his work as a mining engineer for a while to become a musical impresario when he lived in Salt Lake City. He had founded the Youth Symphony of Salt Lake City. So it was a quite musical family, and I was steeped in music as a kid.

Fry: And so this has continued to be a part of your life?

Salinger: Yes. Now there's another parallel part to this which is also musical but also is quite interesting, and that is that when we came back to San Francisco, it was obviously still the Depression. There were some WPA [Works Progress Administration] projects for the arts. My mother was involved in that; she administered all the funds and that went to musicians.

Fry: Where?

Salinger: In San Francisco, when we came back from Toronto.

Fry: Helen Gahagan Douglas had a lot to do with that down in Los Angeles.

Salinger: Right. There was the writers' project, the artists' project, and the music project. My mother was working on the music project. Of course, the result of that was too that our home was just filled with musicians at that time--all of them were dying of hunger. They didn't have any money so they'd come to our house to have a decent meal. I got to know some of these American musicians and composers of that time. Even one of the all-time great French contemporary composers, [Edgard] Varese, who was then living in California would come to our house.

I just tell you that because it was a very musical household. But because of this work with the WPA, my mother was also very political. I would say she was on the left wing of the Democratic party, very much for Roosevelt, but very interested that her children would get experiences that would take them out of the element of just being around kids who lived in the neighborhood where we lived, which was a quite well-to-do neighborhood even though we were not terribly well off, but we lived in a comfortable neighborhood.

So, I think it was either one year or two years, she sent me to the summer camp run by the ILWU, the longshoremen's

Salinger: union, where there were nothing but kids of longshoremen.

Fry: That was quite a change for you wasn't it?

Salinger: Yes. It was a chance to see kids of another, totally other social strata.

Fry: What did you do at camp?

Salinger: It was just like any other kid's camp. There was just a lot of recreation, athletics, and so on. There was nothing political about it, although one of the things that was used against me was that I'd been at that camp and that obviously I'd been indoctrinated by communist doctrine because Harry Bridges was supposed to be a communist. There was nothing further from the truth. There was absolutely no political side to the camp at all. It was just a kid's camp for kids who just didn't have a chance to get away from town.

Anyway, as I say, I graduated from Lowell in 1939 [pauses]--I don't want to get my dates mixed up. No, I graduated from Lowell in 1941, just before my sixteenth birthday.

Fry: Just before your sixteenth. So you're still ahead of your--

Salinger: Yes. I was fifteen when I got out of high school--and simultaneously, in the fall of that year I entered San Francisco State College.

After the death of my father--my father died in 1940. He was killed in an automobile accident in Canada in 1940.

Fry: What differences did this make?

Salinger: It made some changes because I had to go to work. I went to work at a department store. I used to go there after school every day and wrap packages and stuff. In fact, I've never stopped working since then.

First Work Experience

Salinger: In the spring of 1942, I went to work at the Chronicle.

Fry: While you were still at San Francisco State?

Salinger: That's right.

Fry: How did you get a job?

Salinger: I'll explain to you how I got the job. At the time of father's death, his business partner was a mining engineer, a man named Sam Livingston. Although he had nothing to do with it, his family owned the department store called Livingston Brothers in San Francisco. So the Livingstons hired me through the family, the Livingston family.

Fry: I see.

Salinger: And then the Livingstons had a very close friend who worked for the Chronicle, whose name was Caroline Anspacher. Through Caroline Anspacher, they found me a job on the Chronicle. I was very interested in journalism. I had taken journalism in high school. I had become the managing editor of the high school newspaper at Lowell, and so I just followed on, and I went to work for the Chronicle in '42 and stayed with the Chronicle until I was called up to military service in the late spring of '43.

Fry: Had you also been on a paper at the Presidio Open Air School? Did they have a school paper?

Salinger: They didn't have a paper per se--we put out poetry books at POAS. They were compendiums of the poetry written by different kids. We didn't have a newspaper.

Fry: I see. Had you been involved in that too?

Salinger: Yes. Well, I was a contributor to the poetry magazine. But we didn't have a newspaper. The first newspaper I got associated with was the one at Lowell High School.

Fry: What was your beat?

Salinger: At the Chronicle?

Fry: At the Chron, or did you first work--?

Salinger: When I started out, I started out just as a copy boy, you know, hustling coffee and running errands, and so on. But, very soon thereafter, they started a special section in the Chronicle called "Yanks on the Home Front," which was about shipyard workers. It was an effort to make shipyard workers feel as patriotic as soldiers who had gone off to the war.

Fry: Oh, why was that?

Salinger: I don't know. They had that idea at the Chronicle that there should be some recognition given the patriotism of workers as well as people fighting in far off places.

Fry: Some nearby heroes.

Salinger: Yes. So I became the sports editor of "Yanks on the Home Front" and covered--you know, there were inter-shipyard basketball games and inter-shipyard football games. I wrote about those things, in that section.

Fry: Have you ever been in sports? I didn't ask you.

Salinger: I was the manager of the Lowell High basketball team. I had not played myself, but I was the manager. I was also very interested in sports.

Fry: Did this bring you back in contact with any friends that you knew already?

Salinger: I don't remember that it did, no.

Military Training and Service, World War II

Salinger: Anyway, as I say, actually I signed up, volunteered for the navy on my seventeenth birthday, but they didn't want me then. Then when I became eighteen, they called me up, in June of '43, and sent me to Dickinson, North Dakota.

Fry: How did you win that spot?

Salinger: There was a thing during the war, called the V-12 program, which was a program for college students where they would spend a certain amount of time in V-12 school and then go on to midshipman school and become officers in the United States Navy.

Fry: The V-12 courses were on college campuses, as I remember.

Salinger: That's right. And the one that this particular group of Californians, we were almost all Californians [interviewer laughs], were sent to was the state teachers college at Dickinson, North Dakota, which is about as far away from a body of water as you can possibly go.

Fry: Also, it's about as far away from California as you can get culturally, I think.

Salinger: Anyway, I was there eight months and pursued my journalistic activities, became editor of the college newspaper, and ended up writing a regular column for the weekly newspaper in Dickinson as well, the town newspaper, and also helped form a jazz band because we had some great musicians. We would play the dances on Saturday night in Dickinson and around the area.

In the spring of '44, I went from Dickinson to Plattsburgh, New York to midshipman's school. In the summer of '44, I graduated from midshipman's school and was commissioned as an ensign in the United States Navy. I went to subchaser training school in Miami, Florida.

Fry: Subchaser?

Salinger: Subchaser training school. I'd only been there for about six weeks, when somebody came in the classroom and said, "Is there anybody here who'd like to quit school and go to sea right away? We have a spot open for a third officer on a subchaser." I put up my hand. I'd had enough of school. So they shipped me to Eniwetok in the Pacific and I became third officer of a submarine chaser.

As the war progressed, I became next executive officer and finally commanding officer of a subchaser. I was commanding officer when I was nineteen years old.

Fry: Did you have any room in your life for ordinary things like dating or dancing?

Salinger: Not a lot up to that time, to be honest with you.

Fry: Sounds like, anyway, at dances you were the one playing the piano.

Salinger: Yes, and also, I was so much younger than the girls. My first date, as I recall, was the day I graduated from high school, and even that was difficult because the girl was at least two years older than I was.

No, I wouldn't say I had a very big social life in those days. The war actually was a very important factor in my life. People look back on war as being a beneficial thing to them; in my case it was because it took me away for three years, retarded my college education by three years, put me about in the same age class as the other people who were then going through college when I went back to college, and also put me in the same class with girls who I would meet at that time. The war also put me in touch with an awful lot of people that I would never have met in a normal course of affairs. I mean, as a commanding officer of

Salinger: a subchaser I had people from all over the United States, of various levels of intelligence and social background and so on. It was a baffling experience for me, and I had not only that, but the responsibility of command.

I brought the ship back to San Francisco in the early part of 1946.

Fry: That was kind of late, wasn't it?

Salinger: Yes. It could have been late '45, but not any earlier than that. We were converted from a subchaser to a mine sweeper and left behind to do minesweeping operations in areas where there were still a lot of mines. As a matter of fact, as the result of that I was caught up with my ship in the Okinawa typhoon of 1945.

Fry: What happened?

Salinger: I saved the ship by finding a sandy beach and running it aground. Otherwise, we would have sunk. Then during the height of the typhoon I led a rescue of fourteen men who had been thrown into the sea by their ship going down, for which several years later I was decorated by the navy.

Anyway, I then came into San Francisco and decommissioned the ship. In those days you could only get out of service if you had a certain number of points, and since I still had a few points to go, I was assigned to what's called the troop-train command. My job was to be the officer in charge of trains going from San Francisco to various locations in the eastern part of the country and bringing three or four hundred sailors with me and taking them to some camp in some town where they were going to be decommissioned and sent home. Then I'd go home to San Francisco and pick up another trainload and head east again. So I made at least, I think, four transcontinental trips like that, bringing sailors back. Finally I was decommissioned almost three years to the day that I went in the navy, in June of '46.

I remember the day very well because it happened to be the day one of the biggest stories broke. I went back to the Chronicle that day, the day that there was a big jail break on Alcatraz. I forget who the guys were but they tried to break out of Alcatraz and then held hostages, there was a shootout, and everything else. A big story at the time.

II POLITICAL PRESS RELATIONS; INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Early Political Involvement

Salinger: So I took up again my duties at the Chronicle right after I was decommissioned from the navy, and in the fall of that year, got involved with my first political campaign.

Fry: This was '46?

Salinger: Forty-six. There was an election for mayor of San Francisco and there was a candidate named Franck Havenner, who was a member of Congress. He was running against Elmer Robinson who eventually won the election. Anyway, the assistant managing editor of the Chronicle at that time was a fellow named Tom Logan. His wife, Milla Logan, who was a Yugoslav, was running the information side of Frank Havenner's campaign.

I went to work on a kind of parttime basis, three or four hours an afternoon, doing press releases for the Havenner campaign. [brief interruption as someone enters room] So that was my first touch with politics and I believe that's the first time I met Don Bradley. He was also working in the Havenner campaign.

You might check. It might be '47, but I think it's '46.

Fry: That's right. The San Francisco elections were off year.

Salinger: Maybe it was '47. I'm trying to think. You can figure that out.

The next campaign I got involved in was in '48. That I do remember. It was the year Truman was running and I worked for the AFL-CIO in '48 on the right-to-work issue. There was a right-to-work proposition on the California ballot.

Fry: Predating the 1950 bill?

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: So you were primarily on that proposition.

Salinger: Only working on that proposition.

Fry: Who did you work with?

Salinger: I worked with Jack Shelley, who was then the head of the AFL. It wasn't the AFL-CIO, it was just the AFL in those days, as I recall. Jack Shelley, was the head of the AFL and I worked for him in that campaign, putting out brochures and writing--there were some newspapers the campaign put out, and so on--putting it together, that kind of stuff. And that's how I became involved in the 1949 campaign when Jack Shelley ran for Congress.

Don Bradley and I ran Jack Shelley's campaign for Congress in 1949.

Fry: Was Don Bradley doing just PR work primarily?

Salinger: He was doing more the managing side and I was doing more the PR side. Don's specialty was fund-raising and organizing campaigns and mine was more, at that time, press relations, brochures, propaganda, and so on.

Fry: Did you write these yourself? Were you kind of the whole thing?

Salinger: It's so long back. There were obviously others involved. I wasn't doing it by myself. We would write drafts and, obviously, the candidate would change them or modify them or whatever he felt like doing.

But the first major campaign I got involved in was 1950.

Fry: Did you learn anything from Shelley himself?

Salinger: No, I guess it just kept going, year after year. I just kept working these campaigns and learning more as I went along. I think I learned more with Don. Don and I both came up to that period learning as we went along and moving up the ladder. During that period, we were also very active in the Young Democrats.

Fry: Did you have an office in it?

Salinger: I never had an office in it and neither did Don, but we would always run slates at Young Democrat conventions just to keep in things and it got to be a joke. We'd always run slates against Phil Burton, who was very ambitious and wanted to be the president of the Young Democrats and we'd always find some way to beat him in those conventions.

Salinger: Nineteen fifty was a pivotal year for me because in 1950 I seriously considered running for Congress myself.

Fry: Why didn't you?

Salinger: Well, I'll tell you why. I was gearing up to run against Bill Mailliard which would have probably been a losing campaign but at least would have launched me as a political figure in my own right.

Meanwhile, Don had gone out and found Richard Graves to run for governor of California.

Fry: Well, Graves ran in '54. [James] Roosevelt ran in '50.

Salinger: Okay, well then I wasn't involved in the '50 campaign. Fifty, was it Warren-Roosevelt?

Fry: Yes. Warren-Roosevelt and I think it was Mailliard's first time.

Salinger: Then it was '54 that I wanted to run for Congress.

Fry: The sort of pivotal year for the Democrats, generally, I think, was when Adlai [Stevenson] ran in '52.

Salinger: That I remember quite well.

Fry: Were you involved at all with Roosevelt in the 1950 campaign?

Salinger: No. As a matter of fact, I voted for Earl Warren in 1950.

Fry: Oh, you did.

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: I wanted to ask you, as a reporter and an observer, what you thought of Earl Warren.

Salinger: I was very high on Earl Warren. I always had a great deal of respect for him and I never thought Jimmy Roosevelt would be a very good governor. I voted maybe once or twice Republican in my life, but I remember that quite clearly, that I voted against Jimmy Roosevelt in 1950.

Fry: Did you see Jimmy Roosevelt as left, as far left, or not, at that time?

Salinger: That wouldn't have bothered me particularly. I just didn't think he was very competent.

Fry: You had trouble with his campaign?

Salinger: And I could see no reason to throw out Earl Warren who I thought was a perfectly good governor. I had my own problems with Jimmy Roosevelt later, but that's another part of the story.

Fry: In Congress, you mean.

Salinger: No, when I ran for the Senate, which is quite a bit further down the pike.

Fry: We'll build to that.

Presidential Campaign, 1952

Salinger: So '52--

Fry: Kefauver was running.

Salinger: The start of the year was the [Edmund G. , Sr.] Brown-for-President campaign. Don Bradley and I ran the Brown-for-President campaign. It's either in that campaign or in the Shelley campaign that we hooked up with a third fellow who'd become a member of our team, and that was a fellow named Andrew Hatcher. Andrew Hatcher was a black who had come out from Princeton, New Jersey, and who had become the editor of the Sun Reporter, a black newspaper in San Francisco. He got involved in Democratic party politics and I believe he worked in the Shelley campaign.

Fry: Earlier.

Salinger: The one that we had talked about, right. The '49 Shelley campaign.

So the three of us kind of ran the Brown-for-President campaign. There were no illusions that Brown was going to win the campaign. The idea was to try to attract as many votes as possible for the Brown-for-President campaign by meeting as many of the other candidates, other than Estes Kefauver, as possible. He was the big problem.

Fry: Why was he a problem?

Salinger: Because he was on the ballot in California and the others weren't. So you had all these candidates running for president in 1952. You had Richard Russell, Averill Harriman, Oscar Ewing, Bob Kerr. My job was to meet these fellows when they arrived in California and take them around California where they would campaign for the Brown slate, because it was all in their interest that Kefauver didn't win the primary.

Our whole campaign was based on these visiting presidential candidates coming out and giving their endorsement to the Brown campaign.

Fry: Why was the Brown campaign against Kefauver?

Salinger: The Brown campaign was an effort by Brown just to hold the state delegation together and not let it go to Kefauver so that he could play some role at the national convention and play some role in selecting who the next candidate would be.

Fry: Kefauver had come in early and had gotten a number of the more dissident Democrats--

Salinger: No. What had happened was that we had formed a slate of delegates made up of every prominent, known Democrat in the state and so there were none left for Estes Kefauver when he arrived; so he just had to pick up fringe Democrats where he could. The result was he had a slate--I don't know, a hundred names or whatever it was--ninety-eight of which nobody in California had ever heard of. It didn't make any difference as it turned out. They voted for Kefauver anyway.

In fact, that election threw the Democratic party of California into the hands of these people, because the delegation was formed and the party organization, the chairman and so on, and with the exception of John Anson Ford, who was a fairly well-known Democratic figure in southern California--the rest of the Democrats who had supported Kefauver were relatively unknowns and suddenly became the leaders of the party.

Fry: If you could back up and explain to me why you didn't get behind Kefauver; why did you object to Kefauver? I mean you all.

Salinger: Because of our choice of Stevenson. We'd already decided that Stevenson was our man.

Fry: Oh, all right.

Salinger: Therefore Stevenson was going to have to come in at the last minute, it was clear, because he wasn't running in primaries, and the only way to hold California for him was to hold them with the Brown delegation.

Fry: Okay. [pause]

Salinger: It was a Stevenson holding operation.

Fry: Did you know Stevenson?

Salinger: I didn't yet. I got to know him in '52 after the--

Fry: After the nomination.

Salinger: Yes. We lost the primary and one of the more humorous aspects of that whole year was that about a week before the convention, Oscar Ewing, who was the federal administrator of Social Security, and who'd run in the California primary, called me up and asked me if I'd come to the Democratic convention and be a floor manager. That was a very nice offer but he had exactly half a vote that I could tell. [laughter] Managing half a vote did not seem like I wanted to make it my entry into national politics.

Fry: [chuckles] You'd always be remembered as that guy who managed Oscar Ewing.

Salinger: Yes. So I respectfully declined that offer, stayed home, and listened to the convention in California. The minute Stevenson was nominated, even before the campaign organization had been set up by Stevenson in California, we created a thing called the Stevenson-Sparkman Club of California, which was our effort to preempt the Stevenson campaign organization in California for the people who agreed with us, and most of the people that had been with Brown. In fact, that's the way it turned out, that that organization, the Stevenson-Sparkman clubs, became the backbone of the Stevenson organization in California in the 1952 campaign.

Fry: Who is we? Who helped you do this?

Salinger: Don Bradley was the main instigator of the thing. I think that Pat Brown himself was behind it. Elizabeth Smith very much later, Elizabeth Smith Gatov, Roger Kent.

Fry: Did you organize just county by county?

- Salinger: We organized it in northern California because that was really our interest. We hadn't yet gone statewide, we didn't go statewide till '54, I guess, with the Graves campaign. We were still limiting our activities to northern California. The result was that Don Bradley became Stevenson's manager in northern California and I became the northern California press director of the campaign.
- Fry: That campaign was noted for the lopsided press that Stevenson got. You must have had quite a lot to contend with there.
- Salinger: It was a difficult campaign. I mean it's always difficult to run against a national hero. It's funny, I remember that campaign quite well. Almost to the last days, we all maintained an optimism we were going to win that campaign. We were all completely--I mean Stevenson was for us the major figure who'd appeared on the political horizon since Roosevelt and Truman and we were very committed to him. Everybody just worked their heads off in the campaign and we were quite disappointed in the lopsided victory, or defeat, depending on which way you looked at it.
- Fry: Do you remember having problems getting your news releases printed by newspapers? I remember reading statistics that [many] column inches were given to Eisenhower [and little space to] Stevenson nationwide.
- Salinger: It's possible that it was that way, but looking back on it now, thirty years back, or twenty-five years back, it doesn't strike me that we were being monumentally [outdone in the press] . We were getting in our local stuff fairly well, I think.
- Fry: When you're in a campaign like that, as the man who's writing the press releases and so forth, do you ever have time to stop and check to see how much is actually being printed?
- Salinger: Oh yes, we had a clipping service and we'd see what was getting in the papers, sure. Besides writing press releases, I was organizing Stevenson's trips into the state, which were frequent because California is always a big prize; that was a major part of planning. For example, we put together the first big Cow Palace rally for Stevenson, which was an enormous success.

Shelley was the northern California chairman of the Stevenson campaign and I remember it was such a success that Shelley couldn't get into the Cow Palace. He had to end up climbing over a fence to get into the place.

Fry: Because it was so crowded?

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: Do you know anything about the story on Nixon's fund when Nixon was running for vice-president?

Salinger: Yes, I remember when the story broke. And I remember watching the Checkers speech and walking out of the place saying "the election's over; we've won," and then running into people in the street saying, "Wasn't Nixon fantastic!" And realizing that I was totally out of tune with how other people were reacting to this speech.

Fry: Did you and your newspaper fraternity, if there was such a thing, know who got the story released?

Salinger: The story was broken, as I recall, by the New York Post.

Fry: And it sort of hit in California because that's where Nixon was?

Salinger: Right! But it was broken by a New York newspaper first.

Fry: As the campaign progressed, I think Adlai had an awfully good crowd.

Salinger: Big crowds. And the people were very devoted to his campaign. They'd turn out for him. You can sometimes get fooled by crowds, too. In fact, we had a better crowd at the Cow Palace than Eisenhower did when he came, but that didn't prove anything.

Fry: On election night, where did you go to watch the returns?

Salinger: We were in San Francisco.

Fry: At the headquarters?

Salinger: At the headquarters.

Fry: Could you describe it?

Salinger: I can't even remember what the headquarters looked like in 1952. I don't even remember where the headquarters were, to tell you the truth.

Fry: Do you remember when you discovered he was losing?

Salinger: [pause] Not terribly well.

Fry: It was sort of a trauma for most of us.

Salinger: It was a trauma. It was a trauma.

Fry: What did it result in?

Salinger: During the time of these campaigns, I was taking leaves of absence from the newspaper, so with the campaign over, I'd go back to work at the newspaper and find something else to interest me and wait for the next shot.

Fry: I see. You weren't in on any pow-wows of "now that it's over and the people have spoken, what will you do next?"

Salinger: No, I don't think there were any at that time. I think it was so definitive, the people didn't immediately launch into looking at what would happen in 1954.

Fry: Were you in on the CDC formation at all?

Salinger: I was at the formation of the CDC.

Fry: Did you think that was a good idea or did you think that it was going to dilute the Democratic party?

Salinger: I don't remember being wild about it or thinking that it was going to be terribly helpful, but I remember going to the founding convention of the CDC. CDC was quite left-oriented, much more left-oriented in those days than it became later on. It got more moderate as it went along, but it was quite left-oriented in those days.

Campaign for Governor and Lieutenant-Governor, 1954

Salinger: My first real experience with the CDC convention was 1954 when we went to get the endorsement of the CDC for Graves. In fact, we won the CDC endorsement in 1954, which was a miracle considering the fact that they really weren't wild about Graves. He was not really their cup of tea at all.

Fry: He'd been a Republican.

- Salinger: He'd been a Republican until three days before he announced his candidacy for governor. He'd registered Republican but his philosophy was much closer to that of the Democratic party. You would have called him a moderate Democrat.
- Fry: And did you work with Bradley and Roger Kent in Graves' campaign?
- Salinger: Yes--this goes back to what I started to talk about. I was thinking of running for Congress. One day Don Bradley called me and said, "I want you to go meet a guy with me who I think would make a great governor of this state." I went over to Lafayette, California, to the home of Richard Graves and met him. I was immediately taken with him. Richard Graves was an extraordinary human being, highly intelligent.
- If you could have had an examination, a statewide examination for governor, to pick the governor of California, he would undoubtedly have won it with ease. He was the most competent person that I ever met, knew all about the workings of the state from his years of service with the League of California Cities.
- So I decided to throw in my lot with Dick Graves and became the press director of the Graves for Governor campaign.
- Fry: Did it actually make you give up your plans to run?
- Salinger: It made me give up my plans to run for Congress.
- Fry: Did you think, though, that you might run later for Congress?
- Salinger: No, I thought about it several times after that, but then events started to accelerate, as you will see. Anyway,--
- Fry: In that '54 campaign, too, I was wondering if you could give us any information about the lieutenant-governor's race if you know anything about that, [Edward] Roybal--
- Salinger: My recollection is that Roybal was almost imposed on us by the CDC. Have you interviewed Don Bradley?
- Fry: Yes.
- Salinger: He would remember that better than I would.
- Fry: I'm not sure we talked about this.

- Salinger: I think that he was not Graves' first choice for lieutenant-governor, but in order to get the nomination of the CDC, we had to go left and ethnic a little bit, and that's how Roybal became the candidate. He was not a particularly good candidate, either.
- Fry: In the primary, he ran third after two Republicans, so that wasn't a very good omen. He was running against Butch [Harold J.] Powers and [Frederick F.] Houser, who had been lieutenant-governor before.
- Salinger: Of course, we didn't run very well in the primary either.
- Fry: No.
- Salinger: There was still cross-filing in 1954. We just barely got into the finals. [Goodwin J.] Knight almost won the damn thing the first time around. I forget what it was, but I bet 100,000 votes.
- Fry: [On the Senate race,] what was your first impression of [Samuel] Yorty?
- Salinger: I'd known Yorty before. I never really liked Yorty very much. And I was always very fond of Kuchel. There's another story of my whole life which involved Kuchel. But that's farther down the road, too.
- Fry: Also that year, I don't know how involved you were with party machinery, but Elizabeth Snyder became the chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee.
- Salinger: She was a Yorty person, as I recall.
- Fry: I gather that you weren't?
- Salinger: With the [alternation] of the party chairman from north to south, we rarely got into those southern struggles. We would try to influence who would get the northern chairmanship, I mean the chairmanship of the party when it came north. If I recall, I don't know exactly what year, but we had been behind Roger Kent when he was northern chairman of the party and then [for] chairman of the party, because we always worked [on] it.

That was really our group. Roger Kent, Elizabeth Smith [Gatov], Bradley.

Fry: What kind of a gang were you called? I think you were referred to--Kent told me this--as the 812 Gang.

##

Salinger: I left the Chronicle in January of '55 and became the West Coast editor of Collier's.

Fry: Oh, I didn't know that.

Presidential and Vice-Presidential Campaign, 1956

Salinger: Stevenson ran in the primaries in '56, and so in the early part of the year, when I was still in California, I did speech advance for him, working with John Bartlow Martin. John Bartlow Martin was the principal speech writer of Adlai Stevenson.

He was an old friend of mine. I'd met him in the '52 campaign. So he asked me to do drafts on local parts of speeches for Stevenson when he came through California, on the California issues, which is what I started to do. Then Collier's magazine transferred me to New York, before the convention, and made me part of the Collier's convention team, which was headed by Theodore H. White. Theodore H. White and I covered the 1956 Democratic convention, which is where I met John F. Kennedy, who as you remember almost became the vice-presidential candidate.

Fry: So you weren't inside the California delegation.

Salinger: Not at all. I moved from doing the speech advances in the early primary to being a reporter covering the convention, and then by another stroke of--John Bartlow Martin had an assignment from Collier's magazine to do a long investigative reporting job on the Teamsters' Union. But he had put in his contract that he would not do the piece if Stevenson won the nomination in '56. He would go into the '56 campaign with Stevenson.

So when Stevenson was nominated in Chicago in '56, Collier's asked me to take on John Bartlow Martin's assignment, which took me out of politics totally. So I did not work in the rest of the campaign because I was traveling around the United States investigating the Teamsters for Collier's magazine. The only thing I did, the last two weeks of the campaign, being back in New York and writing my piece, I went to the local Democratic party headquarters to see what I could do and it was,

Salinger: "We don't have anything for you to do this late in the campaign, but you can go out and give street-corner speeches," which consisted of getting on street corners and just starting to speak until you attracted a couple hundred people and started to bait people on corners.

So I did that every day on the West Side for about two weeks. It was a great experience because you'd get hecklers and--

Fry: That's the toughest kind of speech assignment, I should think.

Salinger: But that was my only connection with the campaign in the fall of the year of '56. Then the election came and Stevenson lost.

Fry: At the convention where there was quite a battle for the vice-presidency, were you aware of what was going on?

Salinger: I was aware of the battle but I was not at all in it. We were just watching it, reporting it, covering it.

Fry: What can you tell me about your observation of Kennedy's chances?

Salinger: I think I've already covered this in some other oral history.

Fry: Not today.

Salinger: But Kennedy won the vice-presidential nomination in 1956. It was stolen from him, which is the best thing that ever happened to John Kennedy, because it would have been disastrous if he had won that nomination. What happened was that Sam Rayburn, who didn't like Kennedy at all, seeing that it was going the wrong way, suddenly started to recognize it, got people to start switching votes on Kennedy that they had in reserve. Even though Kennedy had gone over the top and could have been named the candidate, he managed to reverse the trend and bring it back to Kefauver. [phone interruption]

In fact, most of our story that we wrote for Collier's was about the near-miss of Kennedy. That was the most exciting part of the convention. By that time, it was a foregone conclusion that Stevenson would be the nominee. But the rise of Kennedy was the most important part of that convention.

Senate Labor Rackets Committee

Salinger: Then, shortly after the convention--no, shortly after the defeat of Stevenson--my life changed totally. I had done a long investigative reporting thing on [James] Hoffa and Dave Beck, the Teamsters Union, and I'd worked on it for five months. On the 14th of December, 1956, Collier's suddenly suspended publication, leaving my articles unpublished.

Fry: Oh! Do you still have them?

Salinger: They were later published in a Catholic magazine called The Sign, under a pseudonym, and I'll explain to you why it was a pseudonym. Because the day after Collier's went out of business, I got a call from Robert Kennedy, who I'd only met once in my life, but who knew I was working on this investigation and who had just been named chief counsel of the New Select Committee on Improper Activities in Labor Management, better known as the Senate Labor Rackets Committee.

He said, "I know you've been working on this for five months. What are you going to do with all the material you've got?" I said, "You can have it. I've got no further use for it." So he sent two of his top investigators to New York and they sat down with me for two days, and I went over all this evidence that I'd accumulated, gave them photostats of documents that I'd gotten; meanwhile scurrying around looking for a job, because in those days if I was off a payroll for a week, I was in serious trouble.

I was hired by Time-Life as an associate news editor of House and Home, which is a kind of a building magazine, about the building market. A duller job I could not have found. But I was rescued from that six weeks later when Bobby Kennedy called me back and said, "How would you like to go to work for the Senate Labor Rackets Committee?"

That call also came on the heels of a second call which was from a fellow named Einar Mohn, who was--

Fry: Who?

Salinger: Einar Mohn--M-o-h-n. He's an interesting figure later in my life, too. He was one of the top vice-presidents of the Teamsters' Union--and one of the honest ones, of which there weren't very many. He said, "How'd you like to become public relations director of the Teamsters' Union?" I could see the

Salinger: fine hand of Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa in that and I declined that offer and went to work for the Senate Labor Rackets Committee.

By an irony [laughs] --my first assignment in the Labor Rackets Committee was to go serve a subpoena on Einar Mohn.

Fry: [gasps] Oh no! Did you have to do it personally?

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: What did he say?

Salinger: He had a sense of humor--happily--more of a sense of humor than Jimmy Hoffa did.

Anyway, I then embarked--that was in February of '57--on two and a half years of work for the Senate Labor Rackets Committee, where not only I was working directly for Robert Kennedy but also got to know John Kennedy. He was a member of the committee, and I became a chief investigator of the committee.

Fry: I see. Did you feel that was a dangerous job?

Salinger: I didn't think much about it-- Well, yes it was a dangerous job, but I mean, you didn't think about it. People said, "Did you carry a gun?" No, I never carried a gun because I figured if you carry a gun, you get killed. Especially when we were working on Jimmy Hoffa, we were followed all the time. Our phones were tapped. But nothing serious.

Fry: You didn't have any protection?

Salinger: None. So the main case I worked on was the Beck case first, in Seattle. Then I opened the office in Detroit and started the investigation on Jimmy Hoffa. And I worked on the investigation of a guy named Nathan W. Scheffermann, who was a union buster who worked for Sears & Roebuck. And then I was involved with a whole lot of other investigations of smaller unions, like the Boilermakers' Union. Anyway, I headed up a lot of investigations over two and a half years.

III KENNEDY CAMPAIGNER; LEGISLATIVE ADVISER

Salinger: In the summer of '59, I was contacted by a representative of the Democratic National Committee, Charlie Murphy, who asked me if I'd become the public relations director of the Democratic National Committee and head up the Democratic National Committee's press efforts in the 1960 campaign.

Fry: What a wonderful opportunity.

Salinger: I had a long talk with the chairman of the Democratic Committee and I said, "You know, there's only one problem in taking on this assignment, and that is I suppose the Democratic National Committee's got to be neutral in the coming primaries, and I've got a candidate. My man's John Kennedy."

It was then it was clear to me that the chairman of the Democratic National Committee was also for John Kennedy. He said, "That's not a problem." [laughter]

Anyway, I went back and told Bobby that I was going to quit the committee and take this job and Bobby said, "Well, how about just letting it sit for twenty-four hours. Don't do anything for twenty-four hours."

Press Secretary to John Kennedy

Salinger: The next morning I got a call from John Kennedy, saying how about coming around and seeing me. That's when he said to me, "I'm going to run for president and I'd like you to be in my campaign--"

Fry: Instead of--

Salinger: Instead of. So I turned down the job with the Democratic National Committee and in September of 1959 I quit the Senate Labor Rackets Committee and became the press secretary of Senator John Kennedy.

Fry: Can you explain to me what was the relationship at this point between the Democratic party and the Teamsters, because you read things about the Teamsters sometimes supporting the Democrats and sometimes not?

Salinger: I think you have to look at the Teamsters in that particular campaign on a regional basis. I think the Teamsters were supporting candidates on a regional basis who they thought were supportive of their ideas. In most of those cases, they were Democrats. It was only on the national basis that there was this fundamental hostility between Hoffa and John Kennedy. But a lot of Teamsters' money went into the Democratic campaign in 1960 at other levels. That didn't prevent local Teamster groups, particularly the California Teamsters, from supporting Kennedy.

The rest of the story, I'm going to skip over the Kennedy years because if you really want details on that, I've written a whole book about that.

Fry: Right. And also you've been interviewed.

Salinger: Yes, for the Kennedy Library too, at length.

Presidential Campaign, 1960

Salinger: Let me come to '64. Let me just say that in the '60 campaign, from the standpoint of California in the '60 campaign, that Don Bradley--when we decided to make our first foray into California in the fall of '59, Don Bradley was put in charge of organizing that trip for John Kennedy.

Fry: Oh. And so you worked with Don Bradley then on that.

Salinger: Right. And with Andy Hatcher.

Fry: What did you think about California compared to other states in the way that they could campaign for Kennedy?

Salinger: There was a big fight inside the Kennedy campaign as to whether we should run in the California primary or not. . Kennedy was reluctant to run against Brown, who again became a favorite son in 1960. And having lived through the Brown-for-President campaign in 1952, I knew that being a favorite son is a zero; it's a paper tiger. So I was pushing him to run against Brown. Take the whole thing in California. It was still winner-take-all in those days.

Fry: And in the meantime, Brown was trying to remain neutral and not come out for anybody in public.

Salinger: Right. He was trying to remain neutral although he was trying to make deals under the table. Say, he'd say to the Kennedy people, "Okay, we have eighty delegates; I'll guarantee you forty of those delegates."

Fry: Forty out of eighty.

Salinger: On the first ballot. "I'll guarantee you fifty percent of the delegates on the first ballot"--which he couldn't even produce, as a matter of fact, as it turned out.

That, of course, was the beginning of the rivalry also between [Jesse] Unruh and Brown, because Unruh was a major operative for John Kennedy in California in 1960.

Fry: You and Unruh must have worked closely then.

Salinger: Yes, we worked very closely.

Larry O'Brien had the major contact with Jesse Unruh during that period, but I would see a lot of him also. I'd say Larry O'Brien and Kenny O'Donnell were maintaining the contacts with Unruh [pauses]--Yes, we didn't go into the California primary, finally, and we regretted it. When it looked like we really needed a couple of votes at the convention to win on the first ballot, there was a lot of moaning and groaning about why we hadn't run against Brown and taken that whole delegation away from him.

As it turned out, everything worked out all right, but--

Fry: I've got somewhere here some--there were some polls inside the California delegation--yes, this is 1960--because California had this representative delegation everybody was for, and those polls show Kennedy at or near the top, but they were relatively close.

Salinger: The Stevenson--

Fry: Stevenson was in there.

Salinger: Absolutely. [Looking at tally sheet] Which of these is the way they actually voted?

Fry: I have not been able to establish that.

Salinger: That should be findable, easily findable, in the--

Fry: Oh yes, the report is, but the problem is that a lot of the people say that they never really voted that way. Some of the people say they never changed their vote from Stevenson.

Salinger: I think Brown manipulated that delegation. As I recall, Stevenson got one or two more votes than Kennedy on the first ballot. But you see, we didn't get anywhere near half the delegation.

Fry: What were you doing about the problem of the people who were in the balconies cheering Stevenson, and so forth?

Salinger: We really didn't pay much attention to that because we didn't think Stevenson had a whisper of a chance at that convention and we just let them have their day. With Mrs. Roosevelt there and Stevenson going on the convention floor, they had that big triumphal day for him, and it was really a Farewell Stevenson Day, because we had it locked up.

Fry: I was kind of interested in your impressions of the California delegation and Pat Brown at that time.

Salinger: It was not one of Pat Brown's finest hours. He certainly didn't endear himself to Kennedy as a result of what happened in the California delegation, and I think Kennedy regretted that he hadn't run in California, just cleanly. We would have won the California primary with ease. With ease. It didn't cost us any money and we ended up winning the nomination anyway, so--

Fry: But then Nixon--

Salinger: The only guy that he [Kennedy] got madder at at that convention than Brown was Bob Miner because even when it was clear that he was going to win, he couldn't get Bob Miner to switch. We had it in the bag then and Miner just let the train roll right over him.

- Fry: Did you have anything to do with trying to get Pat Brown to come out earlier than he did in support of Kennedy?
- Salinger: I talked to him about it, yes, but not with much success. He said, "I've got all these pressures--a lot of Stevenson people." It's true that probably California, of all the states of the union, maintained that Stevenson heritage longer than the others did. There was a lot of feeling about Stevenson in California. People had gone to the well for him twice and were willing to go a third time.
- Fry: A lot of these were your close friends.
- Salinger: A lot of these were my close friends. Exactly. Whereas we had finally overcome this kind of liberal, intellectual dislike of Kennedy in a number of the eastern states, we had never quite gotten through in California to the same extent with the same group of people.
- Fry: In 1958, I thought you had been in Pat Brown's office a little while--
- Salinger: No, no.
- Fry: --when he was governor. You never were?
- Salinger: No, no. I was just trying to think. There was a period there --well, it couldn't have been in '58 because I was already working for the Senate Labor Rackets Committee.
- Fry: And he became governor in '59--early--January 1, 1959.

Political Activity in California

- Salinger: There was a period there and I'm trying to think what year. You'd have to check that too. There was a year when I served as the public relations advisor to the Democratic majority in the State Assembly, and I'd go to Sacramento. I worked for Vince Thomas.
- Fry: Right. That, and also you worked some in a strategy to pour Democratic help into special elections.
- Salinger: I did a number of those special elections. The most notable one was Steve Teale, which we did up in the north country, and George Miller.

Fry: You were there with Don Bradley?

Salinger: Yes, I was. Practically the two of us did it.

Fry: This wasn't a slick television campaign exactly.

Salinger: No, no, it was a campaign that was won on a newspaper that I wrote which we distributed to every voter in the district.

Fry: You just put out your own newspaper?

Salinger: Called the Mountain Messenger. It was a one-issue newspaper called Mountain Messenger. [laughs] We did some others too, I'm trying to remember where.

Fry: Did you work with Hale Champion?

Salinger: Very little. I'd known Hale Champion at the Chronicle. But I think during much of this period Hale had gone back and was at Harvard University and then came back with Brown when Brown became governor.

Fry: He had a fellowship, I guess.

Salinger: So he was away from the state during part of this time.

Fry: That was kind of an important turning point for California because it began a decrease for the Republican margin in the legislature.

Salinger: Particularly in the state senate.

Fry: In the senate.

Salinger: I wish I could just tell you--I mean, we got involved in an awful lot of local elections that were being held at different times because of the death of somebody in office. Special elections. We did a lot of special elections.

Fry: Right. Did you use that same technique on all of them?

Salinger: Almost everywhere, the same technique.

Fry: Steve Teale seems to kind of stand out for some reason. I don't know why.

Salinger: I think we perfected the method in the Steve Teale campaign. That was the one where everybody said we didn't have a chance. We were running against a guy named Cook. I remember the phrase that I put into it because Cook was something of a drunk. We put out this newspaper which was ostensibly nonpartisan. It did not appear at all to be a Steve Teale campaign newspaper.

We had all these stories about the campaign in it. At one point in one of the stories I wrote that--I forget what his first name was--Mr. Cook has campaigned extensively through the district's bars. [laughter] It was a kind of little code word.

Fry: I see. That could clue in the knowledgeable, at least.

Okay then. Also I was very interested in this sort of Democratic coalition that was formed in the legislature. My notes show that you were the sort of staff person for that.

Salinger: Not on a fulltime basis, but I would come up to Sacramento every week and spend a couple of days working with Vince Thomas in his office and planning strategy and doing press releases and finding issues on which we could focus.

It was the first time that the Democrats in the assembly had gotten together with this kind of concerted effort to dramatize their case.

Fry: How did you do it? Did the Democratic legislators hold caucuses, actual caucuses?

Salinger: As I recall, they delegated the responsibility to a smaller committee, which was presided over by Vince Thomas. I don't remember who the others were on it. They pretty much had carte blanche from the other legislators to go ahead on these announcements.

Fry: They would announce the position on an issue?

Salinger: Exactly. Or take a position on something that Knight--I guess this must have been in '57.

Fry: Yes, in Knight's last year.

Salinger: Knight's last year as governor before Brown ran for governor in '58. No, it couldn't have been '57. It must have been '56 because I'd gone East in the latter part of '56 and didn't come back to California for a long time.

- Fry: I was wondering if you remembered anything about the efforts to get a water plan for California, because the Democrats wanted to kind of wait for this until they could get somebody in the governor's chair, I think. Do you remember that?
- Salinger: I vaguely remember that there was a lot of talk about a water plan, but I don't remember that. Clair Engle must have been involved in that.
- Fry: Yes, I think he was. Well, it was such a big issue almost everybody was. George Miller, Jr., who we haven't mentioned yet, was also involved.
- [interruption]
- Fry: At any rate, the Democratic caucus is what we were talking about and about the Democratic coalition in the legislature.
- Salinger: The idea was Don Bradley's, as I recall, who was concerned there was a lack of cohesion in what the Democrats were doing in the legislature and he was really laying the groundwork for the 1958 campaign, where he was going to run Brown's campaign. He was trying to get some kind of joint action program by the legislators who were pretty much individualists. And then the Democrats had been out of power in California so long that they just weren't used to--
- Fry: To having any kind of cohesion--
- Salinger: Yes. And so all of this worked. Number one, the special elections, number two, the work of the legislature was an effort to lay the groundwork for the 1958 campaign.
- Fry: So then you were not in the '58 campaign per se.
- Salinger: I was not in the '58 campaign in any way.

IV U.S. SENATE EXPERIENCE, 1964

Primary Campaign

Fry: I think we'll just skip to--I guess we skip to '64.

Salinger: Let's skip to '64.

Fry: If you want to have a chronology of that in hand, I'll give you my own personal crib notes that I used with Pat Brown and Roger [Kent].

[phone interruption]

Salinger: [long pause as he looks at notes] Okay, let me start at the beginning of this.

Fry: Yes. What I hoped we could do is to fill in what was going on out of California to get it all started, or within California, but from your vantage point.

Salinger: First of all, how did I start to run. I'd been somewhat out of touch with California politics. Kennedy died, Johnson became president. One of the things I'd organized for Kennedy before his death was that meeting in Los Angeles with the president of Mexico, Lopez Portillo. I had for a long time had an idea of decentralizing state visits for foreign heads of states and putting them in another context than always Washington.

I thought that a visit with Lopez Portillo in southern California where there was an enormous Mexican-American population, would be great and there could be a lot of kind of folkloric sides to it and so on.

So, about four or five weeks after Kennedy died, and I was going through with Johnson some of the things we had worked on before Kennedy died, I mentioned the possibility of meeting with Lopez Portillo in Los Angeles. Johnson was very taken by the idea and said to go ahead and plan it.

Salinger: I called my counterpart, the press secretary of President Lopez Portillo, who was an old friend of mine, and we met at Los Angeles and we planned the meeting, and we announced that Lopez Portillo was coming to Los Angeles. That meeting took place, as I recall, in early or mid-February of 1964.

Part of the meeting took place on the campus of UCLA. I had been attending the meeting and had to go somewhere to do something for the president. I remember walking--there were a couple of thousand people standing in front of the UCLA library and all of a sudden, a huge cheer went up. And it struck me. I'd forgotten that because of television I'd become a public figure.

Here I was in my own state, people were cheering me. I was very unhappy in the Johnson administration. I wasn't unhappy with Johnson, because he'd been terribly nice to me, but just the death of Kennedy had been such a blow to me that I had been trying to figure out how I could decently get out of the White House. Banal as it may seem, that particular day started me thinking about why shouldn't I come home and run for Senate.

The big problem was the fact that I'd registered to vote in Virginia. The reason I'd registered to vote in Virginia where I had a home during the time that I worked for the president, was that there had been a school issue of some kind and because it was very important to the school where my kids were going, I had been asked to kind of be the chairman of the committee that was putting through these bonds and so on, which were very difficult. I felt that if you were going to do that kind of an effort, you should at least vote in the election. And so I registered to vote.

Anyway, Stanley Mosk was an old friend of mine, and he was attorney general, and he came to Washington, and I had lunch with him.

Fry: Just shortly after this?

Salinger: It would have been early March. By that time he had been beaten for the nomination by Cranston. I guess the CDC convention had already taken place.

Fry: Yes.

Salinger: I don't know the date of the CDC convention.

Fry: Yes. February 22nd and Cranston was endorsed.

Salinger: Cranston was endorsed.

Fry: Roosevelt withdrew and then on March 4th, Mosk withdrew.

Salinger: So Mosk came to Washington right after he withdrew. I said I was thinking of running. I explained my legal situation to him, the fact that I'd registered to vote in Virginia, and I said was I entitled to run for Senator of California? He said absolutely.

He said the constitution says that you must be a resident of the state on the day you're elected. He said by announcing and moving to California, or moving to California and announcing, I could then become a resident of the state in time for the election, although I wouldn't be able to vote for myself because of the requirement you had to be in the state a year before you could vote.

But, he said, he'd like to check it with some other lawyers and he would give me a call. I had put in a call to him on the 17th of March and he called me back while I was having lunch in a restaurant across the street from the White House, and said as far as the lawyers he'd talked to were concerned, there was no problem.

I had also had contact with a couple of other people in the meantime. I talked to Don Bradley to find out how fast we could put together an organization and would he be willing to take it over. He said yes, he'd be glad to run the campaign. [interruption]

Salinger: And I talked to Jesse Unruh, who I knew didn't like Cranston. Unruh had told me that while he couldn't come out, at least in the beginning, and support me, he could help me, and that he could get some people to help raise money for me.

The other person I talked to was Gene Wyman, who said that if I ran, he'd be willing to help raise money for my campaign. So on the 17th of March when Mosk called me back and said--I think it was the 17th or the 18th; 18th, I think it was--said there was no problem.

I got up from lunch, walked across the street to the White House, wrote out a letter of resignation, and resigned as press secretary to the president, telling the president that I was going to run for Senator. And the 19th was the final day of filing, the next day.

Salinger: I said I had to fly to California that night because I had to get together the signatures. He was very generous about the whole thing, encouraged me, said it was a good idea.

Fry: Who?

Salinger: Johnson. Reached into his pocket, got out a five hundred dollar bill, said, "Here's your first campaign contribution," and within four hours of resigning, I was on a plane headed for California.

Fry: Did you talk to any of the Kennedys?

Salinger: I talked to Jackie and I talked to Bobby. When I asked Bobby's advice, he said, "I just have one sentence of advice for you. Only run if you can win." And a guy who'd gone to USF with me named Rinaldo Carmazzi, who was a lawyer, and I set up headquarters at the Fairmount Hotel and organized the procedure the next day to get enough signatures, and we filed on the evening of March 19th.

Well, all hell broke loose. [interviewer laughs] I'm trying to think where the first money came from, but I know that Don, by the evening of the 19th, had raised \$100,000. So we had some seed money for the campaign.

Fry: Did you get any Kennedy money?

Salinger: No.

Fry: Or money from people close to the Kennedys?

Salinger: I got some money that might have come from the Kennedys, but I got no direct Kennedy money that I know of. However, I think the Kennedys did funnel some money into my campaign, but I can't tell you through whom they did it.

Anyway, one of the first things we did was take a poll.

Fry: First you took your own poll?

Salinger: No, we hired Don Muchmore who then ended up being my pollster for the campaign. The most interesting thing about that poll was [even though I'd been out of the state] working for eight years, my recognition factor was higher than any other candidate in the race, much higher than Cranston's.

Fry: Why didn't Gene Wyman and Unruh and these other people want to

Fry: support Cranston? What did they have against him?

Salinger: Well, first of all, neither Gene Wyman, who was a great close friend of Pat Brown's, nor Unruh, who was not a close friend of Pat Brown's and was still mad at him about the campaign in the 1960 convention (which had been the breakup between Unruh and Brown, you see), came out for me at that time. However, Gene Wyman was trying to use his influence with Brown, which was considerable, to get Brown to back off his support for Cranston and to adopt a position of neutrality in the primary with my arrival on the scene.

[interruption]

Salinger: Pat said, "I'm just too over-committed. I mean I've done it."

The primary had three turning points. One was my debate with Cranston. Cranston got caught out on an issue. Cranston represented the liberal wing of the party. I was seen as the conservative in that race.

It was just after the military had overthrown the Joao Goulart government in Brazil. One of the essential points of our debate was over recognition of the new government of Brazil--

I said that we could never get people in Latin America to adopt democratic procedures if we were going to rush in and endorse military dictatorships. Which put him on the wrong side of that issue from the standpoint of the liberals in the state.

It was over that particular issue that Cranston later sued me for a couple of million.

Fry: Then there were the charges that Cranston, as controller, had a built-in--

Salinger: Slush fund.

Fry: --slush fund from all the inheritance taxes.

Salinger: Yes, that was our issue, the inheritance tax appraisers.

Then there was a third issue which was in the primary less of a spoken issue than it was in the general election, and that was why not vote for a guy who had just spent seven years in Washington and knows where the buttons of power are and can do more for California, which was really my major thing. All the ads that I did in the primary were based on this movement. I

Salinger: don't know if you recall ever seeing my television commercials, but they were coming in and out of helicopters and--

Fry: Yes.

Salinger: --there was a lot of movement attached to them, and the idea was here's a guy on the move who can do a lot of things for California.

Fry: Who helped you with your television commercials?

Salinger: We hired a group of private people. As a matter of fact, I've got a whole file on that somewhere down in the country, including the commercials.

Fry: Oh, we'd like to have a look at your file.

Salinger: One of these days we'll hand-pack boxes down there. I'll be glad to put them in with the rest of the papers in the library, if you want.

Fry: Oh yes, we'd like to have them.

Salinger: Anyway, I would say that the final blow of the primary was the endorsement of Clair Engle. You know that Clair Engle was very, very sick.

Fry: Yes. Who endorsed him?

Salinger: Mrs. Engle's endorsement. When she came out and said--

Fry: She endorsed you.

Salinger: She came out and said her husband was very sick. He obviously wasn't going to be able to vote or anything like that, but she was going to vote for me.

Fry: Lu Engle. How did you get Lu to do that?

Salinger: Jesse.

Fry: Jesse Unruh did it?

Salinger: Yes. But Lu Engle was also a friend of mine. And, of course, I'd been a long-time friend of Clair Engle's. They were much more favorable to me than they were to Alan Cranston. They didn't like Alan Cranston much.

- Fry: Yes. By this time, was Unruh coming out and really working for you?
- Salinger: He was working for me, yes. Towards the end of the campaign, he was much more obvious about it.
- Fry: In the general election?
- Salinger: In the primary, still.
- Fry: In the primary.
- Salinger: Yes. It was no secret in California that Jesse was working for me.
- Fry: Oh, no, it wasn't. It's just that--I think what needs to be cleared up is what he had to do right at the beginning because a lot of people have said that he is the one who brought you out.
- Salinger: No, he encouraged me to run. I made my own decision to run.
- Fry: It started in your own head.
- Salinger: It started in my own head. People think that he called me on the phone and said, "Why don't you run for Senator?" That's wrong. That didn't happen that way at all. I decided to run. I called him and said how would he see it. He asked, "Can you win it if you come out here? But I can't help you much at the beginning because I'm caught in this thing."
- He did help me, however, and particularly on the Lu Engle thing, which was critical.
- I would say that from the standpoint of running a campaign and how we did it, and coming off the starting blocks the day of filing and starting up with zero, the primary was a remarkable effort. I mean, the fact that we could beat Cranston, who had never been beaten in an election in California in his life--we did everything right up to then. We did everything wrong after that.
- Fry: I think another issue was the fair housing issue.
- Salinger: I'll come to that, because the fair housing issue did not intrude into the primary.
- Fry: It wasn't even blowing in the wind?

Salinger: No. It was in the wind, but it was not yet the issue. Where it became an issue was in the period after the primary as we started toward the general election and the campaign geared up on the fair housing thing.

I remember when I first came head-on with that issue and when I decided I would take a stand on that issue was at the caucus of the California delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. I had been added to the delegation as a delegate, as the Democratic nominee. Somebody had resigned and I had been named a delegate to the convention.

Brown--no, we're getting ahead of our story. We're getting ahead of our story now.

After the primary, I left the country. Look magazine had asked me to do an around-the-world tour to report on the state of the world. I was to go to about eight countries, starting in Japan, then the Philippines, then Vietnam, India, Israel, Western Europe and then back.

Fry: Why did you accept?

Salinger: I thought it was good, anyway, to get that under my belt to show that I had more foreign experience, and it was part of the old three-I theory, too, Italy, Ireland, and Israel. [laughter]

Fry: So that if you knew a lot about those three, you could talk to those people in the United States.

Appointment to the Senate

Salinger: Anyway, I was in Vietnam, interviewing General Kan, who was the prime minister of Vietnam, who had succeeded several other prime ministers after the assassination of Diem. A colonel in the Vietnamese army came into his office and said, "There's a call from the White House." General Kan started to reach for the telephone and the colonel said, "No, it's not for you, it's for Mr. Salinger."

I forget who in the White House was calling to tell me that Clair Engle had died and that Governor Brown was getting ready to name me to the Senate and that I should come home immediately. That would have been about August first or second. I caught the first plane out of Saigon and flew for about thirty hours, back to California. I got to California and called Governor Brown,

Salinger: who said, "I'm going to name you to the Senate."

I think in retrospect that was my first mistake.

Fry: Did you have any other thoughts?

Salinger: I had no other thoughts. I mean, the idea of bailing out of the White House in March and being the United States Senator in August was irresistible. Irresistible! Maybe if I'd come at it a harder way--but it's just that everything was breaking my way and I just didn't see how I could get beat. If I'd reflected at that time, as I was able to reflect for others but apparently not for myself, I would have seen the danger in that, the danger in that being that it became an issue in the campaign, and it could have been avoided. In other words, I could have said all during the campaign, "Well, Governor Brown wanted to appoint me to the Senate and I was grateful for that, but I want the people to make a decision," which I think would have gone down better with people across the state, right?

We have to back a little bit because we haven't talked at all about the effort to get my name off the ballot in California.

Fry: Oh, yes.

Salinger: Frank Jordan brought suit in the state supreme court to try to get my name taken off the ballot, so that that story was on the front page of the papers starting the second or third day of the primary. Although it was an effort to hurt me, it actually helped me because my name was in headlines all over the state every day as the court deliberated and these arguments accumulated.

Then, of course, when the court came down and said I was perfectly eligible to run for Senator, it was a major factor in the primary.

Fry: Do you think that the increased sensitivity of people and the fact that you were "carpetbagging" hurt you at the same time?

Salinger: Didn't hurt me in the primary after that decision. I have to pick up the thread where it started to hurt me again. I got over that in the primary, mainly because after the state supreme court decision, Alan Cranston and none of the other Democrats made much of the carpetbagger issue.

So I came back and became Senator. Almost immediately after I became senator--well, first, I flew to Washington to be sworn in. Just before I was sworn in, Everett Dirksen moved in the Senate to prevent me from being sworn in on the grounds that I was not eligible to be Senator from California.

##

Salinger: Let me start again in what happened in the Senate. That is, that when I arrived in the Senate to be sworn in, Senator [Everett M.] Dirksen moved to prevent me from being seated on the grounds that I was not eligible to be Senator from California. He had gotten together with George Murphy, who was my opponent. This whole maneuver was an effort to dramatize the carpetbagger issue, which Murphy was going to use as the principal issue during the campaign.

The debate lasted about two hours and Dirksen was supported by Senator [Karl Earl] Mundt. I'm trying to think of the name of the Senator from Colorado who was a conservative Republican. [musing] It will come to me. It started with a D.

At the end of the two hours, the vote was taken. It was a straight party vote except for two Republicans who voted with me. One of them was Tommy Kuchel who, incidentally, took the floor in my defense saying that California was entitled to have two Senators and I was perfectly eligible to be Senator from California. The other was Senator Milton Young of North Dakota, also a Republican. What motivated him was that at the time he had been sworn into the Senate, there had been a debate about his right to serve in the Senate, and he thought that was unfair about him and so he wasn't going to vote with the same kind of a thing about me.

I forget the exact vote, but since the Democrats controlled the Senate by an ample majority, I was seated. I think in order to do this, it can't be done chronologically, we have to do a--let's talk about what I did in the Senate first and then go back and go through the--

Fry: Good.

Salinger: It was obvious to me that one of the things I needed to do while I was in the Senate was to find some way to demonstrate that even though I had only been in the Senate for a brief amount of time, I had enough clout in the Senate to get something passed.

There was an important bill on the floor about the first week that I was there that had to do with social security. It had some unfortunate effects on the California social security law. My staff and then people from California were in touch with me, saying there had to be some kind of amendment to that law in order that it not cripple the California social security law.

Salinger: So I put an amendment in on the Senate floor to change that law and then went around to see Senator Russell Long, who was the head of the Senate Finance Committee, whom I'd known for a long time, and asked him for his help on the thing, because without him I couldn't have got it passed.

The result was we got it passed and it became one of the arguments that I used. See, here I'd been in the Senate only ten days and already I'm doing something for California. I don't think, looking at it on a long-range basis, my activity in the Senate became a big issue, even though two years later, four years later, it might have become an issue since the first day that I was in the Senate was the day of the vote on the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

Within the three or four hours that I'd been in the Senate, I'd voted for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution along with ninety-seven other Senators. But since the vote had been 98-2, it did not become a big issue in the 1964 campaign. It was only subsequently that people were attacked for having voted for it.

In fact, McGovern, Fulbright, a lot of Senators who later were against the war, voted for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

Fry: Yes. How did you manage to get a staff set up fast enough to really function?

Salinger: I took over some of Clair Engle's staff and I brought two or three people of my own in. Roy Ringer came to Washington to work for me and a fellow named Chuck Daley, who had been one of the legislative assistants to John Kennedy; had worked under Larry O'Brien, also came to Washington to give me a helping hand. He was exceedingly good on legislation.

I also brought in immediately two of my executive secretaries from the White House. I had the nucleus of people who had worked with me in the past plus a lot of Clair Engle's staff, so we were able to function practically from the first day without any problems.

General Campaign

Salinger: The problem was being in the Senate, and it was a year when the Senate went very, very late. In fact, Congress that year went to the middle of October. Here I was in the middle of a campaign. But I was caught in a dilemma of either missing out on my Senate duties, missing on votes, and spending a lot of time in California campaigning, or proving that I could stay in the Senate and vote,

Salinger: and that I considered that important and only coming back to California weekends, which is the course I chose finally.

I would fly out to California on Friday night after the Senate closed; campaign Friday night, all day Saturday and all day Sunday, and then catch a plane Sunday night out of either San Francisco or Los Angeles and be back in Washington on Monday morning to take up my duties in the Senate.

Fry: Do you think you lost much good campaign time that way, to Mr. Murphy?

Salinger: Well, some campaign time, but I've never thought that that really affected the campaign in any way. I think that there were three things that affected the campaign, and it's hard even now, fourteen years later, to weigh which of these things was the most important in deciding the issue.

Number one was the carpetbagger issue. That was highlighted by George Murphy all during the campaign. Then, if you recall, in the last weeks of the campaign, Walt Disney entered the campaign and took full-page ads all over the state of California that just simply said, don't vote for a man who can't vote for himself.

The fact was that I could not vote for myself. Even though I could vote in the presidential election, I couldn't vote in the senatorial election because of the California law. So that was one issue on which they went after me very, very heavily.

The second issue was Proposition 14 (now we're getting to Proposition 14). About two or three weeks after I became Senator, the Democratic convention was held in Atlantic City. I was made a delegate to the convention after the fact. Somebody resigned and left the seat open for me, and so I was a member of the California delegation, went to the convention--and I was a Senator when I went to the convention.

It was at the delegation meeting, I believe it was the first day of the convention or maybe the day prior to the convention, that the subject of Proposition 14 came up as a major issue for the first time. I thought about it for a long time and for me it was a moral issue. I didn't see any way I could avoid that issue. So I gave a speech at the convention--not at the convention but in the California delegation, which is the first speech I gave in which I came out strongly against Proposition 14.

Fry: That was not your first campaign speech? Not your first speech of the campaign?

Salinger: No, it was my first speech on Proposition 14.

Fry: On Prop 14. Okay.

Salinger: No, I'd spoken all over the state during the primary. [interviewer laughs] No, it was my first speech on Prop 14. I came out against it on two grounds. One, that it was morally wrong, and second, that it was unconstitutional. What was the use of enacting a law that would clearly be declared later unconstitutional by the state supreme court.

As the people who were working on my campaign bore down on me on this thing, saying that I was making a mistake--

Fry: Who felt you were making a mistake?

Salinger: Everybody. Don Bradley, Joe Cerrell who ran my campaign in southern California, Pat Brown, all thought that I made a mistake in coming out clearly on the issue, that I should have just ducked the issue, saying it was a state issue and not a federal issue and therefore I didn't have to do it. Which was exactly the position that George Murphy took in the campaign. He kept saying, "I'm running for a federal office and this is a state issue. And I'm not going to take a stand on it."

While I never changed my position on Proposition 14; I spoke out against it all over the state at the same time I was campaigning for myself, I concentrated on the constitutional aspects of the issue in the latter part of the campaign. In other words, saying that it was an unconstitutional thing, and it turned out to be exactly that. The state supreme court, two years later, declared it unconstitutional, but much too late to do me any good.

Fry: What response did you get from the black political community?

Salinger: I must have gotten 98 percent of the black vote in that election. I had a solid support among the black community. My campaigning in the black communities, both in north and southern California, were probably the most enriching part of the campaign because they sensed that they had somebody who was with them not only speaking, but that felt about it from the heart.

It was in a direct line to what they had felt John Kennedy felt about the black issue and what Robert Kennedy felt about it. It was a strong point for me. If you look at the distribution of the vote, I won just hands down in the black community.

Fry: Was this still centered a lot on black churches and was there enough black money to help you in other parts of your campaign?

Salinger: No, but there wasn't much money coming from the black community. We managed to get enough money into the black community. We had a pretty good campaign in the black community. As you say, most of the campaigning in the black community was in black churches.

I had a ministerial committee in the south and a ministerial committee in the north. That was the most solid part of my campaign base.

Fry: Could you just give me a couple of names of black leaders that you worked with?

Salinger: I just can't. I'd have to go back into my files. I'm certain I could pull them out, but I just, off the top of my head, can't think of them right now.

At that point, also in August, another event happened which had a bearing on the first issue which I talked about, which was the carpetbagger issue, and that was the decision of Robert Kennedy to run for Senator of New York.

Fry: Oh yes, that's right.

Salinger: Robert Kennedy was seen as a carpetbagger in New York to the same extent that I was seen as a carpetbagger in California. It just accentuated the issue. People said that the Kennedy people are just, irrespective of where the state is, they're running anywhere.

It was at that time that the lady who is now my wife came out from France to interview me and followed my campaign. She was actually baffled why I would say in every speech I was born and raised in California, and my children were born in California, and I went to school in California. It was an effort to counteract, obviously, the carpetbagger issue.

The third issue which is one we talked about yesterday, was the acceptance of the appointment. I think those three issues all weighed in different ways in what eventually became the narrow defeat that I suffered.

I started out the campaign after the primary with a margin of about twenty-five points over George Murphy--

Fry: In the polls.

Salinger: --in the polls. Unbeatable margin. And saw that erode away.

Salinger: Now we must come to another event which was diversely seen by diverse people and that was the debate with George Murphy. I had been chasing him all over the state, trying to get him to debate, which was a mistake probably, because I was in the commanding position and probably didn't need to debate him.

Anyway, if you look at the debate, I think an objective person looking at the debate on the basis of the content of the debate and what was being said, would say that I won the debate.

Fry: And you won it on points.

Salinger: Yes. But the perception of the public was that I had been too aggressive with this nice old man. And that while I obviously knew what I was talking about, here was a guy who--I mean, if you'd gone to central casting and looked for a Senator--he looked like a Senator. So probably I was hurt by the debate as well. But there's no question that as we watched the campaign move on, my lead over Murphy steadily eroded until about a week before the campaign when we were dead even, at least in my polls.

About three days before the election, Muchmore told me that unless there was a miracle, I'd lose the election.

There is another factor in here that I don't know what part it played, but if it played a part in losing me 50,000 votes, it played a part, because I only lost the election by 150,000, 160,000 votes as it was. That was my then-wife's decision to leave me in the middle of the campaign.

She had campaigned with me in the primaries, but on the night of the primary, while we were flying from Los Angeles to San Francisco, she announced she'd decided to divorce me and she wanted no more of the campaign. She only appeared briefly during the general election campaign, maybe two or three times, but didn't appear in the state at all during the general election campaign.

Fry: Did she not like politics?

Salinger: Hated politics. Hated politics and hated politicians. I don't know to what degree that had hurt, but I'm sure it was not a positive factor.

Fry: Was the public aware of this?

Salinger: There were articles written about it. On call-in shows, people would call in. You got a lot of these call-in shows where people could call in. People from time to time would say, "Where is your wife?" "Why isn't your wife campaigning with you?"

Fry: Planted questions?

Salinger: Right. So all of these issues, I think, combined. Now, if you ask me to evaluate which of them had the most affect, I would have to say Proposition 14. The reason I would have to say that was because Don Muchmore went out after the election and took a poll.

And that poll showed--you see, I ran behind Lyndon Johnson by about 800,000 votes. Actually the irony of the thing is that I ran behind Lyndon Johnson less than Robert Kennedy did. He ran about a million behind Johnson, but Johnson won New York by such an overwhelming margin that he carried Bobby in with him.

Well, he won California by an overwhelming margin, too. But not enough to take me with him.

Fry: Did Johnson work more for Bobby Kennedy than for you?

Salinger: Johnson did everything that I wanted him to do. There, I've got absolutely no complaint about Lyndon Johnson. He made an extra trip to California to help me. He could not have been better as far as I was concerned.

Fry: As you may have read in my notes, there were some things being written or talked about at the time suggesting that Johnson wasn't really pitching in for you.

Salinger: Oh no, that's not true.

Fry: And that you and he had had a falling out at the convention.

Salinger: Not at all true. Not at all true. No. In fact, he had used me as a kind of an aide during the convention and I had close contact with him. Our falling out came at the 1968 convention, which was long after I had been defeated for the Senate.

Fry: That's probably it, then, they got the two conventions confused.

Salinger: No, Johnson and I were still on the same wave length in '64 and I was supporting him, he was supporting me, and there was no problem whatever. Lay that to rest. Nothing that Lyndon Johnson could do for me, he didn't do. In view of his national responsibilities, I thought that he behaved, with regard to my campaign, absolutely perfectly and did everything possible for me.

But this poll by Don Muchmore showed that by a ten-to-one ratio, people who had voted for Johnson and Murphy instead of Johnson and Salinger, because there had to be split votes there to make a difference, had voted yes on Proposition 14. So there

Salinger: was a direct link between voting yes on Proposition 14 and voting for Lyndon Johnson for president and for George Murphy for senator.

Fry: I see. What about Vietnam? It was becoming--

Salinger: Vietnam was not an issue in the campaign one bit. We were still in that period where Vietnam had not appeared as a national issue in any significant way. In '64, even George McGovern was not a vocal figure against Vietnam.

Fry: I think in California the CDC was already passing resolutions against the war and had made it an issue.

Salinger: I don't remember it being an issue between George Murphy and me. It was not. A big issue in the campaign was migrant Mexican workers, wetbacks. Murphy had taken a very hard position-- no, Murphy was for wetbacks. In fact, there's that famous quote of his, you needed wetbacks because they stoop better, to work in the fields.

Fry: Did you take him on, on that?

Salinger: Yes, I did. I did. But I would say that when it really got down to what the issues were, no matter what we talked about, the gut issues were Proposition 14, the carpetbagger--

There's an interesting part of the campaign and one that I dwelt on a lot. That campaign, from the standpoint of how it was covered by the press, was probably the worst-covered campaign that I've ever lived through in my life.

Nobody every found out what I talked about during that campaign. Not one California newspaper sent anybody with me on a regular basis to listen to my speeches and report what I was saying. They weren't doing it for Murphy either. The campaign was not covered on any normal, regular basis. In the last three or four days, people got interested in the campaign.

But I was making rather thoughtful, long speeches on different issues and trying to spell out my positions. None of that ever got in the newspapers. So it was, in a way, a campaign that was overshadowed by these peripheral issues, like the carpetbagger issue or like Prop 14, without a real examination of where we stood on basic subjects that involved the country. That was rather upsetting to me.

Fry: And you were competing with a presidential campaign, too.

Salinger: Yes, we were competing with a presidential campaign. The other thing, I think, that needs to be noted, is the problem of the time gap between the East and the West in a national election and the impact that it can have on local elections--although I don't think that it defeated me, it certainly contributed to my defeat. That is the fact that at seven o'clock New York time, all three of the television networks declared Lyndon Johnson the winner of the presidential election on the basis of sparse returns from a few states. I think in so doing they motivated a lot of people in the western part of the country to stay home and not vote.

Again, Don Muchmore estimated that in California, that at some 350,000 people. Well, in order for me to have won the election, I would have had to have three out of every four of those people, which was probably unlikely to have happened. So I can't say that that was a critical contributing factor to my defeat, but it could have been such a contributing factor in Nevada, for example, where Senator Howard Cannon was re-elected by fifty-nine votes, and where a number of Republican voters stayed home because they thought Goldwater was down the tubes early in the day, you see.

And I did try, in the last days remaining in the Senate, to put in some bills to change that situation, particularly my proposal for a universal-time election law. In other words, that we change our elections and make them twenty-four hour elections in every time zone, but that we stagger those times so that the polls close at the same time everywhere in the country from New York to Hawaii.

Fry: Did you actually put that bill in the Senate?

Salinger: I did, but it never got off the ground.

Fry: Never got through the committee?

Salinger: No, I don't think it was ever taken up. But I still think it's a subject that's worthy of discussion.

Fry: It certainly is. Maybe that's something Common Cause could take up now.

Salinger: Yes. Well, the idea was, for example, that in New York the polls would open at eleven o'clock on Monday night and stay open until eleven o'clock on Tuesday night, and then we would move it back across the time zones, and the polls could all be open for twenty-four hours.

Fry: How did you figure that out? That's a good idea.

Salinger: Well, I don't think there's anything very ingenious about it. I proposed the twenty-four hour thing because, first of all, I thought that it would incite more people to vote. We have rather low turnouts. Although the California election of 1964 had a rather high turnout.

Fry: Yes, it did.

Salinger: It was close to 80 percent. Again, that's another factor we can't blame.

Fry: I think it was our last high turnout.

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: Why don't you put on tape what you told me yesterday, just the little anecdote about the fact that for some reason, they were always giving you the job of presiding over the Senate. Is that something that they push off on new people?

Salinger: Yes, exactly. The presiding officer of the Senate is usually the most junior Senator because it's an onerous task and you have to sit there for hours. As a matter of fact, during the time I was sitting there, there were two Senators who were extremely anti-Vietnam, Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening, who would drone on and on and on, hours and hours and hours, giving speeches on Vietnam. And the Senate was just empty, leaving the presiding officer and either Wayne Morse or Ernest Gruening.

More often than not, I was presiding and I would have to sit there four or five hours into eight or nine o'clock at night listening to their speeches, until they got tired and we adjourned the Senate until the next day. So they gave that task to the youngest Senator. In fact, I was presiding the Senate about two hours after I was sworn in.

Fry: And your son went up and--

Salinger: My son was in the gallery and--

Fry: He was about ten years old?

Salinger: He was about ten years old and he turned to a friend of his and said, "See, there's my father. He's only been a Senator two hours and he's already running the joint." [laughter]

Fry: Just as an aside, why were Morse and Gruening making such long speeches on the Vietnam War?

Salinger: There was still an aftermath of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, and they were the only two Senators who had voted against the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.

Fry: I see.

Salinger: Anyway, to lose that race was a heavy blow for me, personally. I was really down, very, very far at that time.

[phone interruption]

Salinger: I was saying that losing that Senate race was rather one of the low points in my life, because not only had I lost that race, my wife was in the process of divorcing me and the divorce was very costly. It left me with no money at all.

Fry: So you were in trouble in every area of your life.

Salinger: I was in trouble in every area of my life.

Fry: Your career, and your money, and your wife.

Salinger: And I had a \$350,000 campaign debt that I had to figure out how to pay off.

Fry: You must have felt like you'd really done it this time.

Salinger: Things turned brighter within about six weeks after the campaign. Number one, I signed a contract to write a book about President Kennedy for a substantial amount of money. Second, I met again in Paris, by accident, this young lady who had come to interview me in California. I proposed to her three days later and she became my wife and still is today.

And I found a very good job working for one of the fellows who had supported my campaign. And two fellows played a major role in paying off my debts. One was Hubert Humphrey, who came out to California for a big dinner where we raised almost \$200,000.

Fry: In one dinner?!

Salinger: In one dinner.

Fry: What dinner was that?

Salinger: It was a deficit dinner held in Los Angeles. Lou Wasserman was the chairman of the dinner, but he was the most interested in it because we owed him \$170,000. And Bobby Kennedy came out and did a cocktail party where we raised \$30,000 or \$40,000. The rest of the money was paid off--I went on the lecture circuit and started

Salinger: earning money as a lecturer and paying off my campaign debt. About two years later, we had it paid off.

But the experience was not one that made one want to try again, to repeat.

V 1968 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN; OTHER RACES

Troubles in the Primary

Salinger: Although I was tempted in early '68, and this comes to the story about Tommy Kuchel. At the beginning of '68, I began to think again about running for the Senate. I was then a fully bona fide California resident. I wouldn't have any trouble. I was a California taxpayer. I had lived in California since the 1964 election.

But the Republican candidate was Tommy Kuchel. He was such a friend of mine and I had such respect for him (and I had not forgotten the fact that he had spoken up for me in the Senate) that I decided I wouldn't take him on.

Robert Kennedy's Presidential Campaign

Salinger: Instead, I became one of the national chairmen of the Robert Kennedy campaign for president. I say that because fate would have it that I probably could have won that year had I known that Tommy Kuchel was going to get beaten in the primaries by Max Rafferty.

It was in that campaign, you see, where Alan Cranston had a free run because he ran as a Democratic candidate and ended up not having to run against Tommy Kuchel in the general election but against Max Rafferty. So he was able to overcome the national trend that year which was a Republican trend, since Nixon won the general election and carried California.

Fry: Have you recorded on the Bobby Kennedy campaign? Is that recorded anywhere?

Salinger: Well, I've written about it. The part that's important in the Robert Kennedy campaign as far as California is concerned is Robert Kennedy made his decision to run on about the 15th of March, 1968 and announced on the 17th of March, which was St. Patrick's Day, 1968.

We had a series of meetings at Steve Smith's house, who was his brother-in-law. Steve was going to take the direction of the campaign. Because we were really mounting an instant campaign, everybody had to take on some major assignment to get the thing rolling. We were four days away from filing for the California primary, and so my job--I flew to California and set up a suite of offices in the Los Angeles airport hotel.

With the help of Jesse Unruh, Carmen Warschaw, we created the California delegation for Robert Kennedy in three days. And filed that delegation.

Fry: And that was the airport hotel in L.A.

Salinger: It has another name. I think it's the International Hotel at the airport. So that was my first assignment for the Robert Kennedy campaign, getting that delegation organized. I was myself a member of the delegation, ran as a delegate in 1968. Then my job after that for the Robert Kennedy campaign was to supervise the field organization of the press department.

In other words, Bobby Kennedy had a press secretary named Frank Mankiewicz who traveled with him. My job was to hold the home fires in Washington, the national headquarters and the press operation in the national headquarters. And also, state by state, to install local press operations in the states where we were running primaries, which I did primarily in Indiana, Nebraska, Oregon, and California, which were the critical primaries that we were involved in.

As you know, we came in late. We hadn't run in some of the early primaries.

Of course, after Bobby was killed, there was a major problem. That is that the greater part of the California delegates for Bobby Kennedy did not want to switch to Gene McCarthy. Most of them said they weren't even going to the convention.

##

Salinger: Let's finish this phase and then maybe continue tomorrow morning, if that's all right with you.

Fry: Why, sure, Sounds like we're almost through with the California part anyway.

Salinger: Yes. There are a couple more aspects in which you're probably interested in the thing.

Do you want to come by my apartment tomorrow morning?

Fry: Sure.

Salinger: Where are you staying?

Fry: I'm at the edge of the Left Bank.

Salinger: The edge of the Left Bank. That's closer to where I live, probably, than even here. Are you an early riser?

##

Salinger: I was talking about the fact that the Robert Kennedy people in the California delegation were very unenthusiastic about coming out for Gene McCarthy. In fact, some of them didn't even want to go to the convention, which is when Frank Mankiewicz and I went to George McGovern and asked him if he would become a candidate, knowing he couldn't possibly make it but as a holding action around whom we could coalesce a number of Kennedy delegates. We did not want to be for Gene McCarthy.

Fry: What did he say?

Salinger: He agreed.

Fry: Obviously. But I mean did he have any misgivings about entering something so late?

Salinger: No, he didn't have any misgivings because he wanted to run for president anyway and he thought that running in the '68 convention would give him a launching pad for the '72 campaign, which would be invaluable to him.

Frank and I also pledged to him that if he did this thing in '68, we would help him in '72. So he did enter the race for president. As I recall, we rallied 175 delegates around him, which was not inconsiderable.

The McGovern candidacy at the 1968 convention, which was a disastrous convention from every standpoint, was mainly an effort to bring about some kind of harmony in the Democratic convention.

A lot of us who had worked for Robert Kennedy were a lot less hostile to Hubert Humphrey than we were to Gene McCarthy. The trouble was that Hubert Humphrey was trapped by Johnson into all-out support for the Johnson position on Vietnam and wouldn't move towards a compromise resolution which we were trying to put together

Salinger: which could have united the convention.

Fry: On Vietnam?

Salinger: On Vietnam. It's a long, long story but we created a committee which included Walter Reuther, Dick Goodwin--I think I was on the committee, although I didn't participate in any of the negotiations except as a drafter of various texts, in which we attempted to get Hubert Humphrey to accept the text, which was a mild criticism of the administration on Vietnam, not at all an all-out attack on it like the McCarthy people wanted.

Humphrey refused to budge on his position on Vietnam, prodded from Washington by Johnson, who was watching the convention and trying to dominate it even though he wasn't there. The result was when those negotiations broke down, we went ahead then with a very harsh denunciation of the administration, the so-called Anti-Vietnam Resolution, of which I was the lead-off speaker at the convention. That was obviously the moment of my severe break with Lyndon Johnson.

Fry: I see.

Salinger: We lost that fight; the Humphrey forces prevailed and Humphrey was nominated, as you know.

Humphrey Campaign Weaknesses

Fry: Did you go ahead and work in the election campaign?

Salinger: Well, I moved to Europe in August. Right after the convention, I moved to France. I was visited in France about three weeks after the convention by Bill Benton, who was a close personal friend of Hubert Humphrey and who was the owner of the Encyclopedia Britannica and who had been a friend of mine for a long time.

Bill Benton said it was very important for the campaign that I have some visible role in the campaign to show that the Kennedy people hadn't abandoned Hubert Humphrey. So I became the European chairman of the Humphrey campaign. I went around Europe and raised money for Hubert, gave speeches in about five capitals where there were Americans and then came back to the United States the last month of the campaign and spoke on thirty-five campuses for Hubert, which was not an easy task.

Fry: Which was harder, Europe or the campuses, on the Vietnam issue?

Salinger: Europe was easier than the campuses, although we had one legendary meeting here in Paris where I spoke at the Sorbonne in front of about a thousand young Americans, of whom half were draft-evaders or deserters from the army who had come to France. There was a very charged atmosphere, although I think I did make some progress with them.

Fry: Were you personally still supporting the war?

Salinger: No, I was against the war. I was against the war but I thought that the best chance of winding the war down was with Hubert. Hubert was helped out some with the Salt Lake City speech, which I thought was too little too late, but which did start the movement up for Hubert. [phone interruption]

Salinger: What were we talking about?

Fry: You had just finished talking about this really difficult speech at the Sorbonne.

Salinger: Yes. It went better on American campuses, I found. Obviously I did have one principal argument that did appeal to young people and that was that finally you have to make a choice, and the choice in this campaign is between Humphrey and Nixon. Look at Humphrey's record on a whole lot of social issues and look at his past feeling about the Third World.
[phone interruption]

Fry: You said you were pointing out to the students that their choice really was between Hubert Humphrey and Nixon.

Salinger: That's right. There was no other choice in that campaign. If they wanted Richard Nixon for president, they'd stay home and wouldn't vote, which was the direction the McCarthy people tried to take them--to stay home.

Fry: Did you have any idea of Nixon's strength?

Salinger: I don't think Nixon really had any strength; I think Hubert had weaknesses. I think we blew that election. We blew that election at the convention, we blew that election by the conduct of the campaign. We blew that election because Johnson kept Hubert on the Vietnam line too long. And finally we lost that election because, in the final analysis, Johnson and John Connally sabotaged the Hubert Humphrey campaign and elected Richard Nixon. I mean they consciously tried to elect Richard Nixon. I'm convinced of that beyond any reasonable doubt.

Fry: Really?

Salinger: I mean I know an anecdote which is quite revealing. I can't tell you the person that had this conversation with Lyndon Johnson. I'll let him tell it in his own memoirs. But he went down to see Lyndon Johnson after he was out of the presidency, who explained to him that he had decided not to run in 1968 because he knew he was going to die and he would not live out his term and he would never leave Hubert Humphrey as president of the country.

There's no question, for example, that in Texas they did everything possible to defeat Hubert.

Fry: By how? By keeping away campaign funds?

Salinger: Keeping away campaign funds and by subverting the Humphrey campaign, and all kinds of conflicts and so on. I think that with any kind of decently-run campaign, support of the president, allowing Hubert to do his natural campaign, Hubert would have easily won the election. As a matter of fact, I think if the election had lasted two or three days more, Hubert would have won anyway, despite all those handicaps. So I don't think it was Nixon's strength but Hubert's weakness that won that election for Nixon in 1968.

Fry: Did you think that there was enough aggressive--well, what shall I say?--revelation of Nixon's past by the Democrats in that campaign?

Salinger: Oh yes, I think they did everything possible on that subject.

Nixon ran a candid campaign in 1968; ran a good campaign. He understood that the fundamental issue in the country was Vietnam. He made that his issue. He moved to the left of Hubert on that issue, said he was going to end the war and that was the thing that broke the back of the campaign.

Senatorial Campaign, 1970

Salinger: Anyway, to bring an end to this long story, the last major thing I had to do with California politics was in 1969 and 1970, after the Democratic convention of '68 when I began again to think about running for the Senate in 1970. In other words, running against George Murphy. However, I felt that that might be a highly controversial campaign, kind of a replay of '64, so I did the following thing.

Salinger: I went and found the man who I thought could beat George Murphy and I said to him, "I want to run for Senator but if you run, I won't run." And that man was John Tunney. I encouraged John Tunney to run.

Fry: Was he already thinking about it?

Salinger: He was thinking of running. I think he was helped by knowing that if he ran, I wouldn't run. I think I could have beat John Tunney in the primary in '70, though nobody will ever know. I thought there was no use the two of us going at it. Better off having one really good candidate go. Then I helped raise money for John Tunney and launched him on the road to becoming United States Senator.

Fry: Well, you have a very good Republican Senator to run against next time.

Salinger: I'm not going to run. I'd as soon leave Pat Brown to do that. I've given up [interviewer laughs] politics. I'm finished totally with politics.

Fry: To pick up something, what job did you have? You said you got a job after the '64 election.

Salinger: Yes, I took two different jobs after the '64 election and before the '68 election. Number one, I became a vice-president of National General Corporation, which is a movie production and distribution company, which was run by a fellow named Gene Klein, who had been one of my major supporters in the campaign.

But in September of that year, I left National General Corporation with the blessing of Gene Klein and became a vice-president of Continental Airlines, working for Robert Siks, who had also been one of my great supporters in the campaign. And I stayed with Continental Airlines until January of 1968 when I took a leave of absence because I could see the Robert Kennedy campaign rising, which turned out to be right.

And then I worked for Robert Kennedy and after the death of Robert Kennedy, I did not go back to work for Continental Airlines, but moved to Europe where I spent the rest of the year of '68 and into the summer of '69. Came back to California briefly in '69 and early '70 and then moved abroad again and have been abroad since.

Fry: I see. And were you--weren't you working for a Paris magazine?

- Salinger: I worked from '73 till last year for L'Express and then in October of last year went to work full time for ABC.
- Fry: I see. If you have any time, I'd like to pick up--
- Salinger: I just have a couple minutes and then I've got to get to the office because I have a ten o'clock appointment.
- Fry: All right. The little thing to pick up from my last interview is that I was wondering if you had anything to do with the Helen Gahagan Douglas vs. Nixon thing in 1950?
- Salinger: Not in any direct way. I spoke out for Helen Douglas but I was not involved in her campaign.

More on the 1964 Senate Campaign

- Fry: I see. And I wondered if you could explain more how often and when you worked with Andrew Hatcher, the black leader?
- Salinger: Andrew Hatcher followed me through my whole career and that is that we worked in all these campaigns in California together and when I became White House Press Secretary, he became Assistant White House Press Secretary. I brought him to the White House with me. He stayed with me at the White House until the day I resigned to go run in California. He resigned the same day and came to California with me and helped me run my campaign. So there was a constant association with me over twenty years.
- Fry: Was he considered a leader in the black community in California?
- Salinger: He was more a practitioner of the political art in the black community. I wouldn't consider him a leader. But he knew all the black leaders and he was an operative in the black community.
- Fry: Was he also an operative in the white community?
- Salinger: Also an operative in the white community, but less.
- Fry: There was a point about rounding up votes for Graves' CDC endorsement in February of '54 because he did get the endorsement and I wondered if you had helped round up those votes.

Salinger: I spoke for Graves at various caucuses at the CDC convention, but most of the vote counting, most of the hard negotiations, was done by Don Bradley.

Fry: We didn't talk about Graves and his problems of getting labor support, because he was running against Knight who had become very pro-labor in California. Warren was also quite linked to labor. Labor was very conservative. Which reminds me of one thing I should tell you about in my own campaign for Senator, which is interesting in view of the role I played in the Senate Labor Rackets Committee--that I had the full support of the Teamsters' in California during my campaign for Senator after I won the nomination.

They were hand-tied by the AFL endorsement in the primary but in the general election, they supported me fully and contributed to my campaign and that was because of Einar Mohn, who had never held it against me that I had worked for the Rackets Committee and so--

Fry: So he used his influence--

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: --to get them behind you. And you did not have the AFL-CIO behind you?

Salinger: I did in the general election campaign.

Fry: In the general.

Salinger: Yes. But not in the primary.

Fry: Not in the primary.

Salinger: But the people really worked hard for me. In fact, I had some help from them in the primaries--the Autoworkers who were not totally behind Cranston. There were pockets of the Autoworkers, particularly in southern California, who supported me in the primary.

Fry: They usually have a pretty good kitty, nationally. Did they in California?

Salinger: They were helpful financially, although it's hard to tell. You'd have to talk to Don about how the money was raised, but we raised and spent about \$2 million in that campaign. An enormous amount of money. Most of it came out of southern California and the greatest chunk of it came out of the southern California Jewish community.

Fry: The people you've mentioned?

Salinger: Yes.

Fry: Let's see, you've covered the Kuchel story, you've covered the other stories. You mentioned that you started, I believe, your campaign, in the Fairmont Hotel headquarters, and that made me wonder if Ben Swig was coming aboard your campaign.

Salinger: Ben Swig gave me the suite in the hotel. He was a very committed Brown person and therefore didn't come out openly for me, but he did support me and he raised the money for me in the primary. One of the reasons for that was that I was very close to the son, Dick Swig, who had gone to the University of San Francisco with me.

Fry: You mentioned that you had something else to do with James Roosevelt later.

Salinger: [exclaims] Ah! When I was looking around before I'd decided whether I would run or not for the Senate, one of the people I talked to was James Roosevelt who told me that he would support me if I ran and who, the minute I announced, came out for Cranston.

Fry: Oh! Have you ever accounted for this switch?

Salinger: I never have accounted for it, no.

Fry: I was wondering if you could bring us up to date on your mother. She sounds like a very interesting person. You told about how she had worked for the WPA musicians.

Salinger: Yes. And then she worked during the war for the OWI.

Fry: For OWI, and then what did she do after World War II?

Salinger: After World War II, she was a journalist and she was a writer--she wrote books. She's retired to Pacific Grove--she lives in Pacific Grove. She still writes. She's been very, very active over fifty years in the French community. She ran the Alliance Francaise for a long time. And still going very strong. She's eighty-two years old.

Fry: Isn't that marvelous?

What did she think about your running for Senator?

Salinger: She was very for it.

Fry: Helpful?

Salinger: Yes, yes.

Fry: Did she take part in your campaign?

Salinger: Yes, she was very active in the Monterey County committee. Very, very active.

Fry: Being a writer herself, did she have a lot of advice for you on what you should be saying and on your speeches?

Salinger: No. She didn't get into advice, no, no.

Fry: Yesterday I think a phone call interrupted that section on the agreement that you had on money and what to do about the campaign debt after the primary was over. Would you explain that, please?

Salinger: I only know the general outlines of it because I think it was negotiated by Don. We did agree to take on part of the debts of Alan Cranston, which we paid off gradually as the campaign went on. At the same time we were raising money for the campaign itself, for the general election campaign.

Fry: This meant a lot of--more dinner speeches for you and things like that?

Salinger: I guess, as I look back on that campaign, I must have spent close to half of my time on that campaign, raising money, because it was a major effort to raise money.

Fry: What would happen? Would Don Bradley contact someone and then you would have to come in and talk personally to them?

Salinger: I had an apartment in San Francisco and I had an apartment in Los Angeles, depending on where I was campaigning--north or south--and usually they would reserve the breakfast time, say from eight to ten and bring in four people for four different breakfasts, where we talked money.

Fry: You ate a lot of breakfasts? [chuckles] Were you fairly successful?

Salinger: Very successful, yes. Well, we raised a considerable amount of money.

Fry: Yes.

Salinger: Money was not our problem. I mean, we didn't lose the election because of money.

Fry: For Democrats, what are the best sources of money? What were, then, the best sources of money in Los Angeles?

Salinger: Rich liberals.

Fry: Rich because of insurance companies or rich because of the movie industry or what?

Salinger: Really, it's a wide variety of financial interests. I mean it's hard to pinpoint them by group. There was a lot of help from people in the movie industry, not only money but actors and actresses who went out and campaigned for me. But there were people in finance, owners of banks. I did get some small help from the oil industry. And we were able to raise money fairly extensively outside California as well, from people that I'd known in the days when I was press secretary and who contributed to my campaign.

Fry: Who had been supporters of Kennedy?

Salinger: Yes, exactly.

Fry: That was people back east?

Salinger: People back east, yes.

Fry: Well, thank you very much.

Transcriber: Marie Herold
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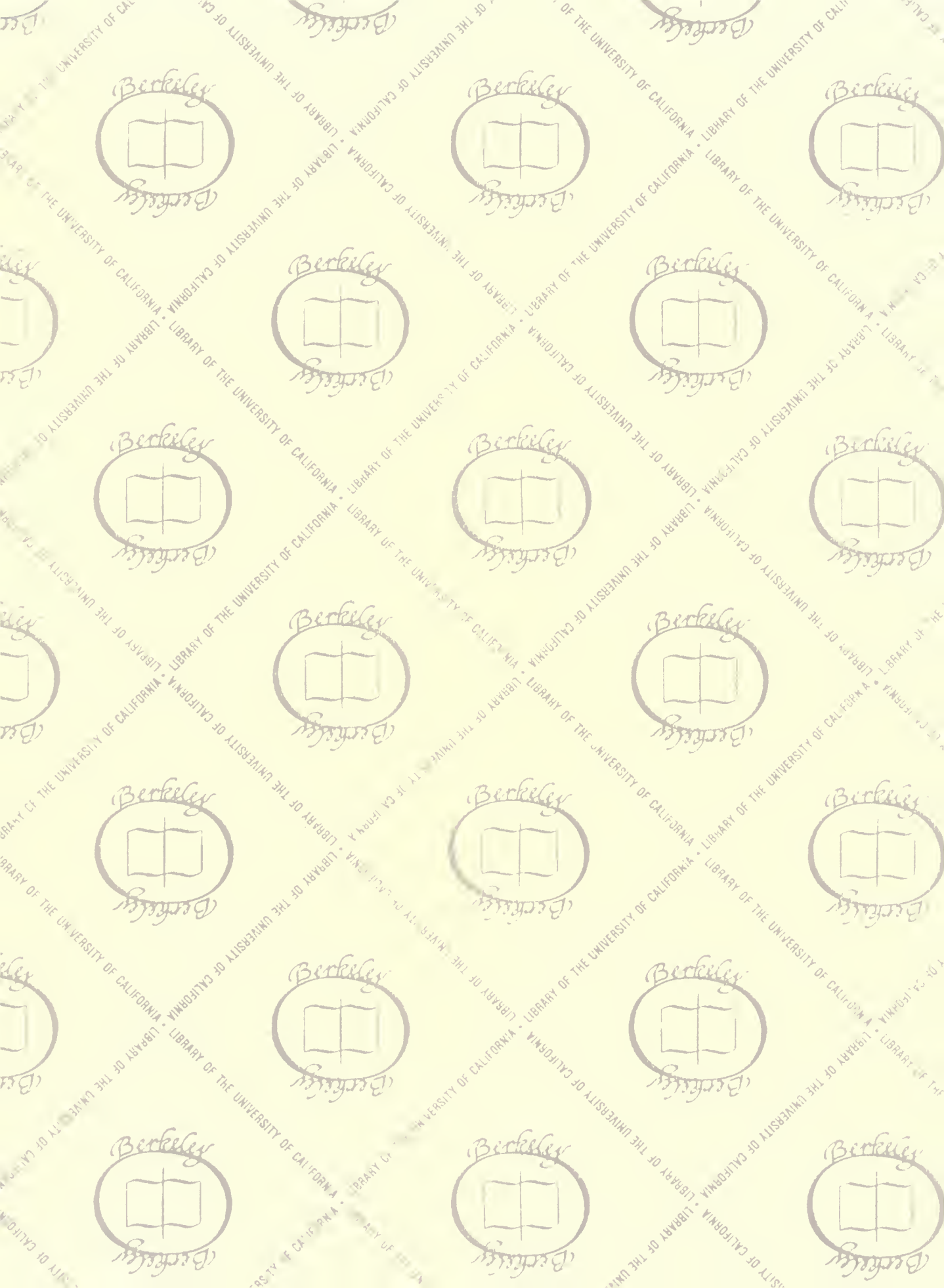
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